



Business booming for Touch of Spice

TOUCH of Spice, which has rebranded as Curators of New Zealand, has two specialty streams and both are booming owning director, Jacqui Spice said at Luxperience.

Her company represents a swathe of luxury villas and, while Australians and New Zealanders have always used them, they are becoming popular with European and American clients travelling with their families who are becoming more comfortable with the concept.

"There is still some hesitation by agents because they are worried the villa won't be the way it looks (in the brochure or on the website), but that's where we come in. We make sure they look the way they are supposed to. We provide all services to go with the villas and do the meet and greets."

The villa portfolio is growing throughout Australia. "We are just forming alliances, doing a lot of partnerships in that space."

The other company stream is destination marketing, particularly for experiential visitors.

Any plans to grow the business? "It is a matter to becoming more well-known with the two things we do, because we are not just one."

"We don't deal with the top end North American market, doing itineraries and flying by private jet. That is not our core market. We market luxury New Zealand to New Zealanders, as well as offshore."

Spice was her former husband's surname but she has kept it "to put a touch of spice in people's lives. This has now been rebranded to Curators of New Zealand's finest experiences."

The secret to success? "We are very detail-orientated. It is all detail, detail, detail. We focus on what people are touching, eating, seeing, tasting, experiencing. We deal with top New Zealand brands, putting them into the villas and giving them as gifts. We always introduce them to these products somehow. We have only New Zealand magazines, so we are really promoting only luxury New Zealand," Ms Spice said.

"We are not trying to be all things to all people and I think we have been quite clever in the way we do it. Everything feeds back into itself and there is nothing we can't arrange or organise. We do big gala events for corporate clients. American incentive houses use us to organise their big galas and dinners. Other corporate groups want us do their 'wow' incentives be in a whole day of clay bird shooting and at the same time we could have a cooking class going on."

Do clients ever become sick of luxury? "Ours are not into the whole opulence thing," Ms Spice said. "They really are experiential people because they stay in villas and want to experience the surroundings. NZ is not the place you want to visit for opulence to do things, and outside."

She described her clients as good people. "They have made their money themselves. We don't deal with the silver-plate people but with those who have made it themselves. They know what they want and have worked hard getting to where they are and they want to enjoy themselves with their family. That is where we come in to enhance."

The secret is in the details. "Don't leave any stone unturned because they will catch you out. One small thing they have asked for and you have missed is what they will remember," she said.

"Everything we do takes so long because of the amount of detail we have to put in. We can't fast-track anything and have to think outside the box all the time."

She has to constantly be thinking what else she can be doing for them. What (to pg13)





Luxury Lodges of New Zealand marketing representative Colleen Ryan at Luxperience.

(from pg12) else have they not asked for that they want? It is about pre-empting what they are looking for.”

Ms Spice has been in business nine years and has had a number of clients returning every year since. “Our repeat and referral business is growing year on year. A lot of business comes from referral.”

As an entrepreneur, she is quick to try new ideas. But the next day she is likely to pull back, slow down and revisit the proposal.

“I have had to slow myself down more than anything,” she said. “I have hired people more intelligent than me in marketing and general management.

“So they help me and rein me in. We have become better at kicking things to the kerb and saying ‘we don’t want that or let’s give that to someone else’ or ‘it’s just not for us’, which is hard to do.”

She has been attending Luxperience since it was first held three years ago, but this year the quality of buyers was the highest.

The venue at the historic wooden Pier 2/3 Walsh Bay was “modernised” inside to accommodate delegates and sellers. “This is what TRENZ should be looking at doing. This is cool - a bit more modern.”

If Luxperience is ever held in New Zealand, Ms Spice said the obvious place should be Queenstown. Contact: jacqui@touchofspice.co.nz.

Guests love Minaret’s isolation, says Wallis

MINARET Station, Wanaka, is probably the most isolated luxury lodge in the country and that’s how guests like it, said GM tourism Matt Wallis.

He was at Luxperience to promote the property, which can host up to eight guests, who have to be helicoptered in.

Being at 1,000m and on the boundary of Mount Aspiring National Park, it is a unique offering that ticks all the boxes for guests.

“We have struck a chord because we cater for everyone from families to FIT travellers to people on adventure holidays. Because we have the flexibility we cater for no more than eight guests. All the activities are on doorstep so we have a much wider swathe of the market that some other properties.”

The property opened 3.5 years ago after all building materials were flown in. Electricity comes from a hydro station at a nearby waterfall, Mr Wallis said.

“So it could easily be the most private lodge in the country. We have had guests coming looking for that complete privacy and obviously when middle of 65,000 acre private high-country station and no road access there are not too many visitors!”

The lodge attracts guests from all over the world and, while there has been a turnaround in the European market, Asia is also growing. “So there is a balancing out quite nicely,” he said.

Mr Wallis, son of celebrated businessman-come-aviation-entrepreneur Sir Tim Wallis, started life as a private hunting and fish guide in New Zealand and overseas.

He founded Minaret Station with his three brothers. Contact: matt@minaretstation.com.