

## Promoting your product 2: Online

Online marketing is becoming an increasingly important research tool for International travelers, the travel trade and traveling professionals. Information must be current, informative and motivational. Today having a presence on the internet is not only beneficial, it is essential.

List your business on [www.taranaki.info](http://www.taranaki.info) by contacting [info@venture.org.nz](mailto:info@venture.org.nz).

Another free website is the Tourism New Zealand consumer site [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com). Visit [www.register.nztb.co.nz](http://www.register.nztb.co.nz) and complete the online registration process.

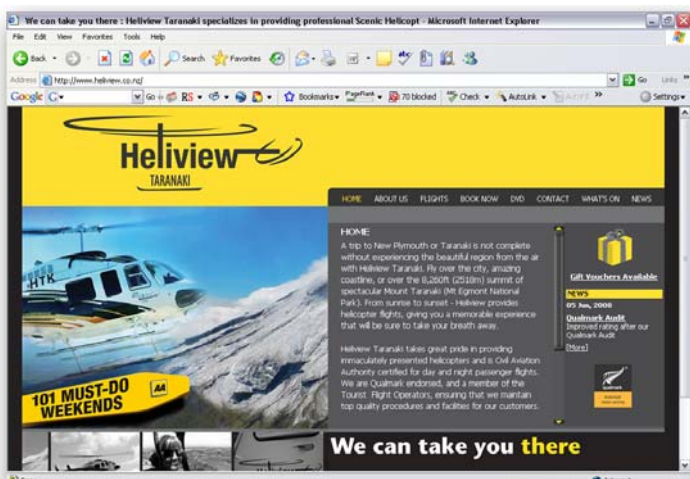
Even if you do not have your own website you can still list on both these sites. With the Tourism New Zealand site you are required to log in and check your details at least once every twelve months.

### Developing your own website

When developing your website, you should note that there are both upfront costs and ongoing costs associated. As well as the design and development costs you will need to purchase a domain name or URL (uniform resource locator - the web site's address).

As with your email address you should try and keep your website address short, simple, relevant and memorable. It is also worth making sure the name makes sense to your customers.

You will need to pay a web hosting company a monthly/annual fee to keep your website online. Depending on your IT skills, you will also need to budget for ongoing maintenance and also software to manage your website, though this may come with the site development as a Content Management System.



Local Tourism Operator Heliview Taranaki's website [www.heliview.co.nz](http://www.heliview.co.nz)

Photos: Rob Tucker



## Online bookings

If you decide to take bookings through your website, it will be vital that you have a 'secure server certificate'. This protects customers' credit card details when they make bookings through your site. Your designer or web developer should be able to organise this for you.

Have a look at the web address next time you are shopping or booking online - the address should start with <https://...> - the additional s means it is a secure connection.

## Site layout and updating

As with your brochure and any other advertising, it is important that the website's general look and feel is kept alive in terms of visual appearance, tone and most importantly content.

The layout should be logically ordered from the viewers' point of view. Again, look at other websites to see what already works.

A simple successful website layout should at least contain the following pages:

- Homepage – a high impact page with images and brief introduction about your business.
- About Us – brief information about you and your business.
- Product details – The different products you have on offer.
- Contact Us – details of how to book and pay for your product and how to find out more information if required. This must be easy to find!

This information must always be: current, correct, and complete (the Three C's of web content).

As with all marketing, images are a major selling point on your website. The use of low resolution images will enable the pages to be uploaded quickly, but it is always worth checking on a range of friends and family's computers to ensure you have the right balance of fast download speed and good image quality.

It is also worth remembering that not all customers are on broadband, so things like elaborate 'Flash' homepages and automatic video players can steer them away from your site in seconds.

## Generating web traffic

Once your website is up and running, it is important that you link to other relevant websites to maximise your exposure. If you are members of Qualmark, TIANZ and other tourism bodies there are opportunities to list your details with them. Also work with complimentary businesses to add your details to their websites and arrange reciprocal links.

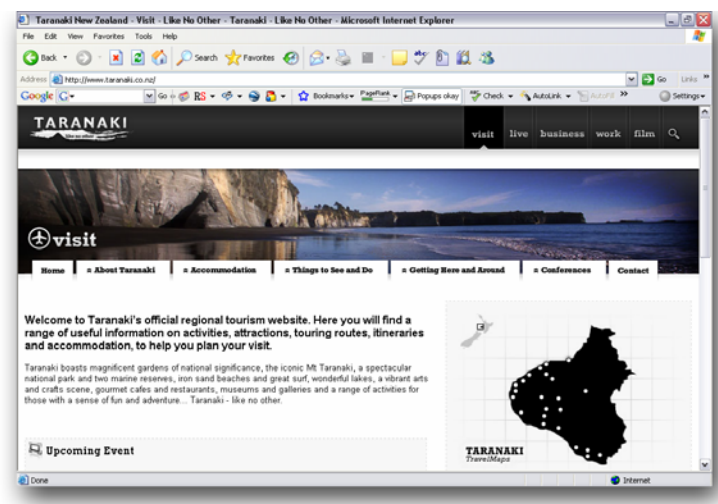
Other things to consider are:

- How many users the site gets each month - this may impact on hosting fees
- Which markets these users come from - do you need to provide specific languages or information
- Does the site reach your target market - are there advertising or promotion opportunities to get your web address out there.

## Search Engine Optimisation

Today, most people find online information using search engines. You can do a lot to improve the chances of your website being high on these lists when a web user searches for specific terms. This is known as search engine optimisation. Generally speaking, search engines look for sites that are updated regularly, have many links to them, and link to many other sites

More information on search engines and search engine optimisation is available online. For a good starting point go to



Venture Taranaki's 'Visit' homepage on [www.taranaki.info](http://www.taranaki.info)