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The great tourism reset has been a 100% pure failure

Brook Sabin · 09:31, Jul 18 2022

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LIZ CARLSON

Brook Sabin is a travel reporter with Stuff and formerly worked in the Press Gallery.

OPINION: The [great tourism reset](#) is a 100% pure failure, and an enormous waste of money.

[After Covid closed the borders](#), the country had a once-in-a-generation chance to reemerge on the world stage as a premium destination, where sustainability was front of mind. Now the borders have reopened the reset looks like a repaint.

[Change is apparently still coming](#), but I fear it may just lead to tinkering rather than transformation.

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Let's recap. At the start of the [pandemic](#), the Government promised a major rethink on how tourism operated in New Zealand after growing frustration with overcrowding and sustainability issues. Then [Tourism Minister Kelvin Davis](#) said we have an "opportunity to rethink the entire way we approach tourism..."

A task force was established and allocated \$755,000. [It delivered an interim report](#) – frankly pointing out the obvious. The final report never eventuated because new [Tourism Minister Stuart Nash](#) put a stop to it - let's hope his decision clawed some



ISTOCK

A tourist bus in New Zealand on its way from Milford Sound to Te Anau.

Nash is significantly more skilled in tourism than his predecessor, but we're yet to see any groundbreaking ideas actually come into force. And in the meantime, the tourism train is steaming full ahead to a familiar destination: business as usual.

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1) Compulsory travel insurance

One of the easiest ways to cull a few low-quality tourists is to make travel insurance compulsory. Popular tourist destinations such as Fiji, Chile, and Israel already have, and require proof of travel insurance before you're allowed into the country.

[Before Covid-19, New Zealand already had a problem with foreigners not paying hospital bills.](#) An estimated \$630 million was not recovered from "ineligible" patients [between the years 2000 and 2010.](#)

This policy would also ensure tourists who end up in hospitals from Covid aren't doing so at an expense to New Zealand.

ROBERT KITCHIN/STUFF

Tourism Minister Stuart Nash.

2) Make tourists pay to access National Parks

New Zealand is one of the most beautiful countries on Earth, and any quality tourist would have no issue paying a fee to access our premium scenery. If you're not happy to do that – we don't want you here.

who want to access places like [Milford Sound](#), or [Tongariro National Park](#), should pay direct.

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A modest fee of say \$20 is a bargain to see Milford Sound, which is a Unesco World Heritage Area. Just like visitors pay to access Yosemite National Park in the USA, Machu Picchu in Peru or Uluru in Australia.

[Nash has mused about charging for access](#), but nothing concrete has emerged.

The same goes with our network of Great Rides. Foreign tourists should pay a small fee to access places like the [Lake Dunstan Trail](#). A \$20 fee for a day of world-class cycling? Sounds like a bargain to me.

3) Limit numbers to iconic sites

impose a four-hour parking restriction to force walkers to take park and ride shuttles.

On top of charging foreign tourists, visits to places like Milford Sound, and Tongariro National Park (notably the Tongariro Crossing) should be limited.

Before Covid-19, [a million people were expected to visit Milford Sound in 2020](#) – it's far too much.

Likewise, the Tongariro Crossing saw a 450% increase in walkers between 1992 to 2016, [with some visitors complaining about overcrowding](#).

4) Make tourists sit a driving test

In the past few years of Covid closures, we've forgotten what it's like to drive with tourists on the road. While many are responsible, some take to the roads without understanding the rules.

Visitors should be made to pass an online theory test they can do at home before being allowed to drive on our roads.

5) Deport dirty tourists

[I made my first trip to Milford Sound in 2019.](#)

I saw Jurassic peaks that soar into the sky, ice-carved fiords, virgin forests, rare penguins, and tourists' turds.

And what made it even worse, was these turds were right next to a public toilet.

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Soon after getting the job, Nash indicated he wanted to ban [tourists from hiring vans without self-contained toilets](#).

game changer.

Here's what would be: deporting dirty tourists.

In Singapore, you're fined for littering. Even leaving the toilet unflushed in a public place attracts a \$150 fine.

It's time to send a similar message: New Zealand takes enormous pride in our country. And only those who share that pride, and treat our land with respect, are welcome. And if you desecrate our national treasures, you'll be kicked out – and won't be welcome again.

What do you think of the tourism reset so far? Let us know in the comments below.

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– **Mt63** 6 minutes ago

So many aspects of the tourism industry conflicts with the need to reduce our energy consumption and reduce emissions to reduce climate change. It is such an irony that so many Governments say we need to do more to slow down climate change but then in the next breath the same politicians are pushing hard for bring back the tourists pre the COVID pandemic.

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– **Vonkaspinkoff** 6 minutes ago

As per usual nothing will be done and NZ tax payers will continue to foot the bills racked up by overseas tourist. The most important and necessary thing to do is make travel insurance compulsory. You don't need another useless, expensive taskforce to work this

– **Xess** 10 minutes ago

This article assumes there is a line of people wanting to visit New Zealand for tourism. We are the global hot spot for covid per capita - No one's coming so far to get covid here. At least for now and there aren't enough airlines flying here

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– **alanzs** 11 minutes ago

Great ideas. Mandatory health insurance seems like a no brainer. It's been great to see the tourists coming back into the country. Nothing like following a Jucy Van, going 55ks or a Brit van weaving on the road only to speed up at passing lanes.

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– **kensinma** 15 minutes ago

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