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Air New Zealand Queenstown Marathon Helps Inspire Trans-Tasman Runaway Series

The launch of the [Runaway Barossa Marathon](#) on 21 October 2017 in Australia has much to thank two New Zealand events for, with the success of the Air New Zealand Queenstown and Hawke's Bay International Marathons seen as the blueprint for the new Runaway Marathon Series.

The Runaway Marathon Series builds on the 'new' concept in marathon running, with events in New Zealand and Australia based around a weekend escape with friends and family offering brand new marathon and half marathon courses (and 10km and kids' runs) in stunning destinations, ([click here](#) for more on the Runaway Barossa Marathon).

Ironman Oceania Managing Director Dave Beeche, said he is excited to launch the Runaway Marathon series in Australia on the back of the success of the Queenstown and Hawke's Bay International Marathons, in a series that will also encapsulate the New Zealand events under the one umbrella.

"Australia is a natural location for the Runaway Marathon Series to grow as it brings together our love of the outdoors, our passion for being active, our enormous wealth of delicious foods

and produce, and combines them with some of the most stunning locations on earth,” said Beeche.

“Queenstown and [Hawke’s Bay](#) have shown the way of the future for these types of events, no longer can you measure out a course and hand someone a race bib at the start and a medal at the finish line and be content, customers are more discerning now about the events they want to be a part of and the experience they are looking to enjoy.

“All Runaway Marathon events will allow our competitors to choose from a variety of race distances, on courses that take them through stunning locations on easy running terrain, in surroundings that allow them to immerse themselves in great food, wine and entertainment – often in a group of family, friends or workmates in a shared experience.”

The popularity of these two relatively young New Zealand events is borne out in the numbers, with Queenstown attracting close to 10,000 participants in November 2016 in just its third edition, while Hawke’s Bay will host close to 5,000 next Saturday week (on May 13), in the second edition of the event that takes runners from various start lines (the full Marathon from Marine Parade) to the finish line Food and Wine Festival at Sileni Estates.

Beeche says the attraction is often strongest to these sorts of destination events from outside the local region, bringing significant benefits to the local economy of each location.

“Runaway Series events will appeal to everyone, but in particular to those looking to travel to a desirable location and combine the challenge of a marathon with a sampling of the local regions features and delicacies.

“Queenstown brings in 90% of its field from outside the Central Otago area, while Hawke’s Bay this year has 76% of entries made up of visitors. Each brings a considerable spend to the event in the form of accommodation, food and drink and tourism activity – typically with family or friends along to share the experience.”

Air New Zealand will put on nearly 1000 additional seats to help transport competitors and supporters to the Hawke’s Bay region for the Air New Zealand Hawke’s Bay International Marathon on May 13. The airline will operate seven additional return services between Auckland and Hawke’s Bay and two return services from Christchurch between May 12 and May 14 to accommodate demand for travel to the region for the marathon.

The appeal of a weekend away seems to be of particular interest to women, as they continue to dominate the numbers, with an amazing 67% of the entry list for Hawke’s Bay being female.

“Events like this used to be the domain of men, but that is changing and in a big way,” says Beeche. “It is women who are looking for the chance to take on a challenge and do so with family or friends alongside or there in a support role.

“Hawke’s Bay is of course the day before Mother’s Day, so I can imagine that the café’s and wineries will be busy with Sunday bookings as mums are celebrated for their achievement the day before, as well as for the role they play every day in their family units.”

The Air New Zealand Hawke’s Bay Marathon is not about the hard core, it is not focused on elites setting record times. Yes, those athletes are catered for, but event organisers are just as focused if not more so on those who are looking to enjoy a highly social experience at a highly desirable location, to escape on a weekend away with friends to achieve to their own goals and expectations, and to then have the chance to celebrate in a stunning setting with world class food, drink and entertainment options.

“Our stories about our competitors are the stories that inspire everyday New Zealanders to become more active and to search out their own similar goals. The entry list for Hawke’s Bay is made up of all manner of runners, from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and regions – many of whom have their own inspirational story to tell and share.”

It is planned for the Runaway Series to have four or five events in Australia, with Runaway Barossa the first to be announced, and for Queenstown and Hawke’s Bay to be the two New Zealand events in the series.