



## MAPUA FERRY, NELSON

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**Web Address:** [www.mapuaferry.co.nz](http://www.mapuaferry.co.nz)

**Owners:** Andrew Schwass and Neville Grubb

**Services Offered:** Ferry service, bike hire, event hospitality

The Mapua Ferry is in its second year of operation. It connects Rabbit Island and the buzzing Mapua community with a restful and picturesque seven minute service, operating seven days throughout the summer. Cyclists can plan around the reliable hourly service and enjoy a unique rest stop as they explore Nelson's Great Taste Trail.

Mapua means "abundance" and the wharf area is home to an eclectic array of cafes, restaurants and shops for the enjoyment of locals and visitors alike. It's a perfect place to have a bite to eat and relax in the renowned Nelson sunshine as part of the ferry journey.

### OPPORTUNITY

The Mapua Ferry was built specifically to connect two parts of the Nelson's Great Taste Trail. It had been operating for just a year when Neville Grubb and Andrew Schwass got together to buy the Ferry and lay down plans to further develop the business and grow the tourism offer for visitors to Nelson's Great Taste Trail.

Neville's experience as owner of Trail Journeys, which provides tourism services on the Otago Central Rail Trail, and Andrew's hands on operational focus meant that together they could create a business that can grow as the Nelson trail develops. They are passionate about great service and see good business in helping cyclists to get the best out of their holiday by making it really easy for them to have fun while they visit the area.

### SOLUTION

#### Offered Products

Since setting up in September, they have been fine-tuning daily operations to run as efficiently as possible. Andrew says they really wanted to put in as much effort as they can early in the piece so they can springboard from a strong core business. That means Andrew is on deck a lot and through establishing a reliable service and building a following over the 2013 summer passenger numbers are growing nicely.

#### Marketing Focus

Their target markets currently include locals and domestic visitors from Canterbury and Wellington - although all visitors to Mapua are in their sights.

They are careful not to over-promise. Their greatest challenge is the Nelson Great Taste Trail isn't yet completed. However, once the Mapua to Kaiteriteri section is fully open they expect to ramp up to greet Australian and other international visitors attracted to ride the trail.

- Their website and Facebook page are key communications tools to keep passengers up to date about local events and sailings.
- They have just begun promoting the Mapua Ferry as a private function venue, using flyers. The Waimea Estuary is the largest enclosed estuary in New Zealand. A two-hour evening cruise enables passengers to take in the gorgeous scenery and wild life and to enjoy one of Andrew's infamous BBQ's.
- Mapua Ferry is a sponsor of the *Mapua Easter Fair* which attracted 16,000 visitors to the area last year (and as an active community business they love that the proceeds from the Fair go to the local kindergarten and primary school). Their involvement will mean they can help alleviate some of the parking challenges created by the large in-flux of visitors through the long weekend.
- They have produced rack cards for display in areas with high foot traffic and with some of the regions accommodation providers.
- Customer surveys are providing excellent feedback to further enhance their offer.
- A weekend timetable for the off-peak winter is in planning but does need to be economic. When the trail to Kaiteriteri is completed the timetable will be reviewed.
- A further benefit, bearing in mind the Mapua Ferry didn't exist 18 months ago, is the bed and breakfast accommodation being established in the area and the excitement in the community as more cyclists are moving through the area more frequently.

The flow on effects to other businesses, accommodation suppliers and operators have been substantial. Andrew says it's so important to work well with the local business community. *"The locals are awesome and have a great respect for the economic opportunities the trail is providing. Mapua has seen a vast increase in visitors and local businesses are getting the benefits of more patronage and longer opening hours in the summer."*

#### Quote/Unquote Andrew Schwass

##### What's Mapua Ferry's key to success:

*"Customer service is key. I think we run a really friendly service, we don't let anyone down and our focus is that travellers enjoy the Trail and the Mapua experiences as much as they can".*

##### What is your current focus area:

*"Our aim is break even over our first two years, that would be marvelous. For the season we'd like to keep up the daily operation until the end of April. But our eye is on the future. We want to use our establishment time to get the business in the best possible shape for when the trail is fully completed and Nelson Great Taste Trail attracts new revenue streams from Australian and other international visitors as well as a dedicated New Zealand following."*

##### Andrew's Last Words/Favourite one liner to share:

*"Come and discover magical Mapua, we have the friendliest service and a passion for what we do!"*

## RESULTS

It's very early days for the Mapua Ferry and the Great Taste trail so while the business is seasonal it is developing nicely:

- They have transported over 3000 passengers and 2000 bikes in December alone.
- Recruitment for two relief staff is underway to give Andrew an occasional break and some extra people power when needed.
- Bike hire has been introduced with around 15 bikes a week hired by ferry passengers.

