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**Media release from Glacier Explorers
8 June 2011**

Glacier Explorers closes after another record breaking season

Three historic and unprecedented glacial calvings, massive floating icebergs and many 'blue ice' sightings were all part of the most magnificent season in the 35 year history of the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake, according to Aoraki Mount Cook Village Limited General Manager Tourism Denis Callesen.

Glacier Explorers spectacular glacier and iceberg viewing boat trip closed for winter last Monday (**June 6**).

"To say it's been a once in a lifetime season is an understatement," said Mr Callesen. "Passengers aboard Glacier Explorer boats have encountered record-breaking calvings, seen ice that had been hidden beneath the surface for more than 300 years, and experienced colossal floating icebergs. It has been wholly unprecedented."

Signs that this would be an extraordinary season began in early August 2010 when a 250 millimetre downpour of rain caused the lake to rise resulting in a lift of thousands of tons of ice across the entire 600m width of the face, and led to the anticipation of a spectacular 10-million ton ice break or 'calving' into the lake.

On August 18, the calving began. By the end of August 22, 30-50 million tonnes of ice had crashed into the lake, leaving twenty massive, floating icebergs up to approximately 300 metres in length.

On December 19 a second calving following heavy storms caused the Tasman Lake to rise by five metres, providing spectators with even greater viewing of the crumbling, towering ice cliffs before getting up close to touch the new 'bergs in the water.

On January 13 passengers were treated to an incredible sighting of 'blue ice' emerged when the base of a massive iceberg rolled over. Photographers had just two hours to capture the crystal-clear blue ice before it oxidized on exposure to air and turned white.

"The ice is so dense and compressed that it's up to five times harder than the ice you might have in your gin and tonic," said Mr Callesen.

On February 22, passengers aboard two Glacier Explorer boats were rocked by 3.5-metre waves as they watched from a safe distance as around 30 million tonnes of ice collapsed into the Terminal Lake as a result of the Christchurch earthquake. The earthquake triggered what was believed to be the largest freshwater basal calving in the world to be caught on camera.

And, on 28 March, a million-tonne calving took place after a 4.1 magnitude earthquake hit the area.

“The enormity of the natural phenomenon that’s taken place this season is just incredible,” said Mr Callesen. “If you consider that we only get to see 10% of the berg above the waterline, it’s mind-boggling to think 90% still lies beneath the surface.”

Mild autumn temperatures and calm conditions allowed the Glacier Explorers season to operate two weeks longer this year, but the boat trip is now closed for winter with cold weather and ice making it difficult to access the lake which will eventually freeze over.

Mr Callesen said passenger numbers were up 9% on last year’s record season.

“It was predicted that the 2010/11 iceberg viewing season on Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake would be the most magnificent in the Lake’s 35 year history, and Mother Nature did not disappoint,” said Mr Callesen. People were very keen to get out in the boats and check out the natural action.

The Glacier Explorers boat trip has become so popular that next year’s timetable during the high season will be altered to accommodate more passengers.

“During next year’s peak we’ll operate seven trips a day, up from six this year,” said Mr Callesen.

“Safety is always our ultimate priority and we constantly monitor the glacier and icebergs in the lake for any signs of rolling or calving. Boat touring was limited to 800 metres out of the terminal face when we suspected it would collapse.”

Glacier Explorers gives passengers an unforgettable experience in a majestic, high alpine environment. A 70 minute boat trip takes them past constantly moving icebergs, some of which can be touched from the boat, and past the impressive face of the Tasman Glacier.

Iceberg cruising is fast becoming a ‘must-do’ activity for visitors to *Aoraki* Mount Cook, not only for the up close and personal iceberg experience but also for spectacular views of surrounding mountains and some of the best photographic opportunities in the national park.

Glacier Explorers plans to re-open its spectacular boating trips on 15 August 2011 (weather, lake and road conditions permitting). The Hermitage & Glacier Explorers website has been upgraded and it's now much easier to book any combination of activities, accommodation and meals. For more information or to book your trip please visit the website www.glacierexplorers.co.nz.

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Photo captions (higher resolution available):

1/ Glacier Explorers on the Tasman Terminal Lake

2/ Tourists get up close and personal on a Glacier Explorers boat trip

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