

Largest ever 'calving' on Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake *Aoraki* Mount Cook National Park

A major 'calving' event on the front face of New Zealand's Tasman Glacier has created the largest-ever iceberg seen on the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake.

The calving – believed to have happened in the early hours of yesterday morning (**Saturday February 23**) – saw the entire 650m-wide front face of the Tasman Glacier in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park break away into the lake.

The ice broke into around 20 huge icebergs, including one which Glacier Explorers Operations Manager Bede Ward described as "the largest ever" by quite some way.

"The last major calving we had was just over a year ago which was estimated at 30 million tonnes of ice braking off the glacier," he said.

"This is much, much larger. There's one iceberg which surpasses the last largest-ever single iceberg (nicknamed Taniwha) we've ever had on the lake by quite some way.

"The sheer walls of this iceberg reach 40 to 50 metres in height above the waterline, and would almost certainly be 200 to 250 metres beneath the water line. That's simply enormous."

Mr Ward said the timing of the calving was also a huge coincidence, as the Tasman Glacier Lake had a similar calving of this scale just five minutes after the Christchurch earthquake two years ago.

"The Tasman Glacier has been unusually quiet for the past 12 months with only small calvings suggesting the glacier had maybe started to slow down," he said.

"That's proven to the contrary after it released the 'mother lode' yesterday."

Mr Ward said the icebergs created by the calving would make for "fantastic viewing" for visitors on board Glacier Explorers Mac Boats, which take passengers out on the lake to view towering ice cliffs and the huge 'bergs'.

"It's an extraordinary opportunity to view nature in action, simply spectacular," he said. "Guests who have been out with us today couldn't believe their luck, and the icebergs will be around for months to come."

No-one witnessed the calving as it happened at night.

Glacier Explorers offers the only tour of its kind in New Zealand at *Aoraki* Mount Cook National Park and is just one of three of its kind in the world. The tour is hugely popular with New Zealand and overseas visitors, taking 25,000 visitors this season.

"Getting out there on one of our boats on this magnificent lake is so unique and is becoming more and more popular with visitors to New Zealand," said Mr Ward. "It's on most people's 'to do' list while they're here."

Glacier Explorers trips depart seven times a day, leaving every hour and a half. Bookings are essential and can be made at www.glacierexplorers.com

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Picture captions (available in hi-res) :-

- 1/ Glacier Explorers driver Duncan Crawford and passengers admire new icebergs and 'blue ice' on the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake**
- 2/ Clear blue ice created by ice calving at Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake**
- 3/ Getting up close to icebergs with Glacier Explorers**

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