

September 16 2013

Glacier Explorers up-and-running and excited for summer season

Access to New Zealand's stunning Tasman Glacier is once again possible as iconic tourism operator Glacier Explorers opens for summer business this week taking the first guests on their once-in-a-lifetime boat trip.

Guides and guests took to the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake on Saturday (14 September) aboard the company's Mac Boats, surrounded by around 50 icebergs of varying sizes, marking the start of the 2013/14 season.

Glacier Explorers offers the only tour of its kind in New Zealand at Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and is one of the only accessible glacial lakes containing icebergs in the world.

Trips don't operate in winter as the lake is frozen over, however trips resume from this week as the lake has melted.

The company's four Mac Boats, including a new 15-seater vessel called the Nor'easter, were lifted into the lake last week by helicopter.

Glacier Explorers Operations Manager Bede Ward, who's led the experienced team of guides for a number of years, said opening weekend was "amazing".

"It was perfect; the sun was shining and there were some great icebergs to be seen. The team and I are stoked to be back on the water once again," said Mr Ward.

"You never get tired of being out here, it's ever-changing and every day you see something slightly different," he said.

"It promises to be yet another exciting season ahead with a couple of 'calvings' predicted over the next few months," said Mr Ward.

"No one knows exactly when this natural phenomenon will take place but during a recent helicopter flight over the glacier we could see signs of movement. We'll see a couple of calvings this year, though who knows if they'll be as big as last year's", Mr Ward said.

Last summer saw a major calving event take place forming the largest-ever iceberg seen on the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake; a delight for guests and guides.

In February the entire 650m-wide front face of the Tasman Glacier in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park broke away into the lake and into around 20 huge icebergs, providing a spectacular sight for passengers. The iceberg remains of the calving can still be seen today.

Glacier Explorers take passengers out on the lake to view the terminal face of New Zealand's largest glacier, the Tasman Glacier, and the icebergs that periodically break away to float on the glacial lake offer "an extraordinary opportunity to view nature in action".

"Getting out on this magnificent lake is a unique experience and is growing in popularity.

"It's on most people's 'to do' list while they're in New Zealand, it's simply spectacular," Mr Ward said.

The tour is hugely popular with New Zealand and overseas visitors, taking over 25,000 visitors last season.



Glacier Explorers, Aoraki Mount Cook, now open for summer



Glacier Explorers Mac boats are heli-lifted into the Tasman Glacier Terminal Lake

Glacier Explorers trips depart up to 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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Opening weekend for Glacier Explorers marks promising start to summer season

About Glacier Explorers

Using customized boats (see below), Glacier Explorers offers customized trips to New Zealand's Tasman Glacier terminal lake for a fascinating glacial encounter.

Following a short bus ride and alpine walk, guests cruise the rapidly-growing terminal lake taking in spectacular mountain views and scenery. Icebergs of every shape and size periodically tear away from the glacier allowing you to touch and taste the 300-500 year old glacial crystals which float on the surface of the lake.

Surrounded by the stunning Aoraki Mt Cook National Park, one of the natural wonders of the world, Glacier Explorers offers the only tour of its kind in New Zealand at Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and is one of the only accessible glacial lakes containing icebergs in the world. Due to the natural aspect of the experience no two trips are ever the same as the lake, glacier and surroundings are ever-changing.

About Mac Boats

Glacier Explorers' state-of-the-art Mac Boats are virtually indestructible and the first choice in safety and durability. Made in New Zealand they are fully-moulded Polyethelene one-piece double skinned pontoon boats made from quality virgin polythene. They're impervious to osmosis and corrosion, designed to survive New Zealand's extreme UV level and have a low environmental impact because the polythene is fully recyclable and colour fast.