

## Naturists Exchange Uniform

Last night Joan and Kevin Sampson, the owners and operators of Katikati Naturist Park, were very happy to exchange their corporate uniforms for formal wear to receive their Tourism Industry Award as winners in the Holiday Park category. They see the achievement as a reward for their hard work over the last fourteen years in transforming the Park from an untidy empty block of land into a thriving tourist business with a full range of accommodation and recreation facilities. Katikati, the Mural Town, is at the northern end of the Tauranga harbour on the Pacific Coast Tourist Highway.

Their award entry highlighted the fact that Katikati Naturist Park is not just a holiday park providing accommodation to passing travellers but is also a venue for a style of recreation attractive to visitors from a multitude of countries. With naturist resorts and holiday parks being a significant and recognised part of the tourism industries in Europe, Florida, parts of the Caribbean, and elsewhere, they see the winning of the award as bringing that recognition to New Zealand.

Kevin said that with so many of New Zealand tourism businesses having only a few employees it is great that they are able to compete with the large corporate concerns in terms of providing their guests with a quality experience. He pointed out that these small tourist operations throughout the country bring a lot of flow-on business to their areas.

They said, however, that they could not have achieved the establishment of a successful high quality business without the support of their customers from all around the world. To them one of the most satisfying parts of the business is the introduction of people to the joys and relaxation flowing from the naturist experience. For Joan and Kevin it is very rewarding to see how new guests at Katikati Naturist Park find mental liberation in being freed of modern society's pressures about their bodies. To quote from two of their guests: "Dear Kevin & Joan, My wife and I would like to give you both a huge thank you for creating such a wonderful sanctuary. This was our first time to a naturist park and for both of us it was a fantastically liberating event. We still find it hard to believe just how quickly we both felt so at home being naked with total strangers who quickly became friends, We were highly impressed by the friendliness of the other visitors and staff and the feeling of openness and acceptance was truly

amazing..... We are now totally converted to the naturist lifestyle. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

The Sampsons noted that their guests coming to the Park from crowded cities in New Zealand and overseas really appreciate the spaciousness of the grounds, the neighbouring river, the clear night skies, and peacefulness. They also appreciate the true New Zealand hospitality shown when complete strangers welcome them into their group at the BBQ, in a spa, or around the campfire. It was commented that these simple pleasures New Zealanders take for granted are a truly luxurious experience for guests from other countries.

This very natural character of Katikati Naturist Park’s grounds was explained as being totally consistent with both the International Naturist Federation’s definition of naturism and the current drive for sustainability by the tourist industry. In the 1970’s the International Naturist Federation in a visionary move defined naturism as; “A way of life in harmony with nature, characterised by the practice of communal nudity, with the intention of encouraging self-respect, respect for others, and for the environment.” This definition is the foundation of the Park’s operation. In order to protect the river on its boundary the Park has its own tertiary sewage treatment system with final discharge to the surface of a grassed area. With an emphasis on recycling, minimising the use of damaging chemicals, and reducing energy use as much as feasible, the Sampsons explained that these measures were fully endorsed by their guests.

The tourism Industry is about people and to be successful a tourist business has to be completely focused on its customers. Joan and Kevin said that they realised how fundamental this was when working through the intensive awards process and that this was a key to Katikati Naturist Park’s success. In regard to the awards process they said that they consider it would have been a very useful exercise even if they had not won since it forced them to analyse a number of aspects of their business and how those aspects interacted. They commented that this has given them a firmer foundation to take the Park forward to be even stronger and better.

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