

SEA SHUTTLE meets growing tourism DEMAND

BY KEITH INGRAM

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Underway during her sea trials in the Abel Tasman National Park



Each year, especially during summer, thousands of people visit Abel Tasman National Park, set in Tasman Bay at the top of the South Island, to enjoy its golden beaches, sheltered, unspoilt inlets and estuaries, and stands of rich native bush.

Many visitors use water taxis to take them up and down the coastal area of the park, or hire canoes and kayaks for a few hours to a few days. The park is also renowned for its Coast Track, one of New Zealand's Great Walks, which links beaches, headlands and outcrops of granite, with a scattering of limestone and marble.

Campsites or lodges along the way provide options for those who want to go rough or enjoy a more comfortable holiday.

Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle recently introduced a third vessel, the 14m powercat *Adele II*, into its fleet to grow the business and meet increased local and tourist growth.

The company operates a regular taxi service, plus scenic

cruises and charters from its base at the town of Kaiteriteri, 5km from the park boundary.

The company, owned by two couples, Keith and Heather Knapp, and Paul and Debbie Smith, was established in 2001, with one boat. The new service ran a scheduled timetable which complemented existing operators in the area.

It operates all-year-round between various points along the coast of the park. They run a sea shuttle service on both scheduled and private charters and some special water taxi work, and carry around 20,000 passengers per year, with seasonal peaks associated with school and public holidays. The *Adele II* replaces an existing vessel with a larger one. She also extends the company's capabilities.

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