

### **Chinese students study South Island tourism**

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) will welcome more Chinese students to the West Coast later this year, following the success of the first Ecotourism Guiding programme.

TPP's Outdoor Education and Ecotourism Business Development Officer Zane Smith says students who arrived in mid-January for the first intake of the programme are now taking part in industry internships.

"We have been incredibly pleased with the success of this pilot project, and we are looking to run a further two eight-week programmes this year. The feedback from the students has been positive and we can refine the programme further to ensure we are meeting both industry and student needs."

Chinese student Lisa Li says she has enjoyed learning about the New Zealand tourism industry, where she believes the natural world and adventure are key draw-cards.

"Everyone comes to New Zealand for feeling the natural world and adventure. I can feel every Kiwi is proud of their country, and they protect nature, history, culture. Doing every small little thing from everyone then becomes a big thing for the country, for the blue sky and air, for the rivers, forests, mountains, ocean and animals.

"All the teachers we had are different from China. I feel they are not just teachers, they all worked for the area that they teach and had many years' experience. They don't just teach from the book, they teach from every experience."

Demand is growing in the New Zealand tourism sector for Mandarin-speaking staff members to lead tours of Chinese visitors. Zane says TPP has worked closely with industry to look at their needs and tailor a programme that delivers for the sector.

He says the programme aims to supply qualified guides to New Zealand's tourism industry who understand the environment as well as the needs of our tourists. "Whether our graduates go on to work in the NZ tourism sector, or return home to China with a better understanding of our tourism market, the results are positive for our industry," he says.

Working in the classroom and with high-profile tourism businesses like Ngai Tahu Tourism, Shotover Jets, Franz Josef Glacier Guides and AJ Hackett Bungy, students get a solid appreciation of the New Zealand tourism landscape and are ultimately able to host visitors to New Zealand across a range of tourism ventures.