

Entrant company name: **Tin Man and Tourism New Zealand**

Entry title: **Tourism New Zealand x The Hardest Geezer**

Category: **Travel, Transport or Tourism Campaign**

SUMMARY

New Zealand isn't just a destination. Its a world of extremes packed into one unforgettable place. Jagged mountains. Ancient glaciers. Lush rainforests. Sun-drenched beaches. World-class food and drink and a rich, living Māori culture. Its the kind of country that truly has it all.

But this raised a challenge: how do you showcase this breadth and diversity with limited time and budget, and still cut through the clutter? To boost consideration and capture attention, we knew we had to break the mould. No more polished travel reels or glossy influencer posts.

Enter Tourism New Zealand x The Hardest Geezer. We partnered with Russ Cook - the viral endurance adventurer known for running the entire length of Africa - to take on his next big challenge: the 2434 km Te Araroa trail across New Zealand. That's over 60 ultra-marathons through some of the most spectacular and demanding landscapes on Earth.

Along the way, Russ didn't just see New Zealand - he lived it. He ran past glaciers and through ancient forests, went canyon swinging in Queenstown, explored into the otherworldly beauty of Milford Sound, and shared stories with locals who embody Manaakitanga - the deep-rooted culture of generosity and hospitality.

This wasn't just another travel campaign. This was an unscripted, authentic and unforgettable journey through the real New Zealand. Seen not from the window of a tour bus, but through the eyes - and blisters - of someone who pushed himself to the limit to experience it all.

And the results really went the distance. Over 1.5 million YouTube views, 61.5 million total impressions on Russ branded content, 717 pieces of coverage - with 471 million opportunities to see & an 8% increase in consideration.

BRIEF, OBJECTIVES & BUDGET

New Zealand tops countless bucket lists. But this campaign needed to turn bookings from 'someday' into 'today' To do this, we needed to showcase the country's diverse experiences and tackle common barriers like distance and cost in a relevant, fresh and inspiring way.

Ultimately, we needed to make the dream holiday to New Zealand feel inspirational and irresistible but within reach.

Key objectives:

- Increase consideration by helping consumers imagine what a holiday in New Zealand could look like
- Showcase the ~ four pillars - landscapes & scenery, culture, quality food & drink and leisure activities
- Address barriers and misconceptions such as visa requirements (Google search terms up 60% in 12 months), flight time (perception is 40 hours) and misconceptions about weather

Budget: £190k

RESEARCH, PLANNING & STRATEGY

We had two distinct audiences: 25“34s and 55“64s which meant our channel delivery needed to be two pronged.

With 60% of younger travellers turning to social media for inspiration - and a third booking directly through it - we embraced a bold, social-first strategy to connect with millennials right where their journeys begin.

In addition, with more and more 55-64s looking for adventure holidays, we combined social assets with a tailored earned media strategy to pique interest and inspire action.

THE IDEA, CREATIVITY & INNOVATION

To spark wanderlust and crush travel hesitations, we teamed up with none other than Russ Cook - aka 'The Hardest Geezer'- fresh off his legendary run across Africa. His next epic feat? Conquering the entire length of New Zealand on foot.

Over 72 gruelling days and 2,434 km, Russ powered through wild coastlines, rugged mountains, and breathtaking landscapes on foot, turning the country into his personal ultra-marathon.

Along the way, he dived into iconic Kiwi adventures and local culture, proving that time, distance, and logistics are no match for an unforgettable New Zealand journey. His every stride and piece of content was a call to action: get out there and experience it for yourself.

DELIVERY & IMPLEMENTATION

Social content was the heartbeat of the campaign, brought to life through a captivating Weekly YouTube Series that followed the journey in real time and captured the beauty of New Zealand as well as dispelling misconceptions about everything from the weather to complicated visa applications. This was amplified by short-form content across all major platforms including Instagram and TikTok. A robust media strategy was built around four key milestones:

The announcement: A high-energy pre-departure reveal of the challenge, aligned with Russ's social post, designed to spark media buzz and build anticipation through exclusive interviews and early access content

Start-line: A bold media push as Russ kicked off the run, combining on-the-ground content with spotlighting the incredible journey ahead and the stunning backdrop of New Zealand

Midpoint momentum: A curated highlight reel of the first half of the adventure, shared with media outlets along with compelling video assets to maintain excitement and showcase progress

Finish-line finale: A powerful wrap-up featuring celebratory content and a heartfelt recap of Russ's ultimate endurance experience - designed to inspire audiences and encourage bookings for 2025/2026 and beyond

RESULTS, EVALUATION & IMPACT

Did we increase consideration for New Zealand by helping consumers imagine what a holiday could look like?

Yes! 717+ pieces of coverage, including a 10 minute segment on Sky News, a BBC News Homepage article with over 400,000 views and 37 pieces of broadcast talking about the wonders of the country. This resulted in an 8% increase in consideration and a 5% increase in bookings and enquiries.

Did we showcase the four pillars and challenge the travel barriers?

Yes! In 86 different pieces of social content Russ quashed all travel barriers in an engaging way, addressing our audiences concerns and showcasing more than 20

different activities - all with breathtaking NZ scenery as his backdrop. Key messaging was also delivered via press materials, media interviews and global toolkits.

Did people engage with the initiative?

They sure did!

61.5 million impressions on Russ branded content

1.5m YouTube views

2.1 million organic views on IG partnership reel

471 million total opportunities to see/hear

Average engagement rate 8.9% (5.9% over benchmark)

WHY SHOULD THIS CAMPAIGN WIN?

This campaign redefined how a country could tell its story to the world and did away with traditional, travel PR tactics. We ditched glossy travel clichés, and opted for grit, authenticity, and human endurance to show the true wonder of NZ

A bold departure for both our client and conventional travel initiatives, it let the landscape speak for itself as Russ ran through it. It turned an ultra-endurance challenge into a narrative device for national tourism, fusing adventure with culture, realism with aspiration, and tapping into the zeitgeist by partnering with a figure who embodies perseverance and curiosity.

This campaign didn't just showcase New Zealand - it made people feel it. That's not just creative. That's unforgettable.