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SILVER FERN MARATHON RALLY ATTRACTS EUROPEAN TEAMS

With just six weeks to go before the October 16th – 23rd NZ Silver Fern International Marathon Rally, organisers are pleased to have attracted around a dozen British and one Dutch team down under to their event.

Following a previous successful Silver Fern event here in 2006, British drivers have spread the word and are returning in greater numbers, to compete in the eight day high speed gravel event, held around the scenic back roads of the South Island of New Zealand.

While here many of the teams take time to tour New Zealand and visit the many sights and attractions on offer. Relaxation is high on their agenda's after a week of full on high speed rallying, and one team has already booked a weeks fishing trip to Rotorua and Taupo.

Silver Fern Rally organisers have always placed importance on the scenic aspects of the South Island when planning their route. While on the events two night stopover in Queenstown, it is expected many of the teams will take the opportunity to try everything from jet-boating and bungy jumping, to golf.

In addition, the organisers have a dinner planned a-top the Queenstown Gondola, where even the local drivers will be wowed by the views over Lake Whakatipu and the Remarkables mountain range. Then while in Invercargill teams will visit the world renowned, late Bill Richardson's, truck museum.

Motorsport tourist numbers are growing fast, with New Zealand now hosting a number of major international motor-sporting events, including Repco Rally New Zealand, the V8 Supercars, the Dunlop Otago Classic Rally, Targa Rally NZ, the World Superbikes and the A1 Grand Prix. Silver Fern Rally organisers are now part of this growth.



www.silverfernally.co.nz

The 2006 Silver Fern event saw an economic impact return of \$6.5 million. The 50 local and 21 International competitors, teams, supporters and media not only partook of accommodation, meals, fuel and repair services, but were also part of a TV program organisers contracted, which was shown to an estimated worldwide audience of 60 million.

Scotsman Jimmy McRae, father of the late Colin McRae, and marathon rally specialist Iain Freestone lead the international entries for 2008. Freestone saying he "loves the New Zealand roads, and this time he plans to finish", and adds "as a bonus I can go fishing after the event is over."

Christchurch's Bryce Biggs is one of several local car owners and team managers, looking after a number of the British drivers, including McRae, and his Jardine Lloyd Thompson team mate Andrew Barnes, as well as fellow Londoner Peter Smith. Biggs recently spent time in the UK and is still negotiating with other drivers for their attendance.

McRae who returns regularly to NZ, competed in the 2006 NZ Silver Fern event, holding 3rd place until a crash dropped him down the list of finishers, while Barnes is a regular competitor in the Classic East African Safari Rally.

Interestingly for 2008, the NZ Silver Fern Rally has drawn its support from tourism based sponsors, with the involvement of Scenic Circle Hotels, Christchurch City Council, Thrifty Rental Cars and Bluebridge Cook Strait Ferry's.

The 2008 NZ Silver Fern International Marathon Rally, held over 8 day's in New Zealand's South Island, is the longest duration motor-sport event currently on offer locally.

The October 16th - 23rd 2008 event, will start in Christchurch's Cathedral Square, and take competitors south to Queenstown, Dunedin, and Invercargill, back to Dunedin, Timaru and Christchurch before finishing at the new Marlborough Convention Centre in Blenheim.

For event details and the latest info on the rally visit:- www.silverfernally.co.nz

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