

The development of cave adventure tourism in the Ananui / Metro Cave on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand.

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Abstract

Norwest Adventures Ltd was formally established as an Adventure Tourism Company beginning trading over the 1986 Christmas period. A wide base of activities including wild caving, tramping, climbing & abseiling along with fishing & hunting were offered.

In 1998 NWA Ltd obtained a one year permit from the Department of Lands & Survey for adventure caving in the formerly off limits "Metro Cave". The permit included "Underworld Rafting"

In 1990-91 it became evident that the company could become a viable entity and construction commenced of a Gear Shed / Garage and the "Charleston Cavern".

Over the summer of '91, NWA Ltd initiated an extensive track upgrade to the upper river crossing.

In Sept 1993 NWA Ltd finalised a 10 year fixed term Guiding Concession with the Department of Conservation.

During 1996 a suspension bridge was constructed across the Nile River at the upper level crossing.

In December 1996, following the "Cave Creek" tragedy, the existing elevated walkway and steps up to the cave entrance was removed and reconstructed by NWA Ltd.

In 1997 planning commenced for Nile River Bush Tram and bollards and ropes were made and installed along the Tourist Route in The Metro Cave in order to control the pathway and spread.

Late in 2000 and early 2001, a set was built and the BBC production "The Lost World" filmed.

In December 2001 NWA Ltd released evening "Charleston GlowWorm Cave Tours".

In December 2002, the Charleston Nile River Rainforest Train was commissioned.

In February 2003 an application was lodged with the Department of Conservation for the renewal of the NWA Ltd Caving Concessions.

This paper will expand on the decision making, difficulties and successes in developing an Adventure Tourism business on conservation estate.