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INTERNATIONAL VISITORS KEEN TO GET OUT OF THEIR DEPTH

There's a new and fast growing breed of tourists flocking to New Zealand. They can't wait to get their clothes off and get out of their depth - and they're not embarrassed to do it in the company of strangers of all ages, shapes and sizes! On January 29 in Wellington, this daring new breed of international visitors will be joined by none other than Her Worship, The Mayor of Wellington, Celia Wade-Brown and three of her counsellors.

Organisers of the State New Zealand Ocean Swim Series say international registrations from recreational swimmers have doubled this year citing increased registrations from Australia, Europe and North America. The State sponsored series consists of six ocean swims throughout New Zealand with the third in the series, the Capital Classic taking place in the Capital on January 29.

"Ocean swimming as a recreational activity is gaining in popularity worldwide. Most of our international registrations are Baby boomers. They have the money, the time and are looking for adventure holidays in exciting destinations. Many of the international entrants have competed in other ocean swims around the world and use our events as an excuse to visit New Zealand," says State NZ Ocean Swim Series, Event Director, Scott Rice.

David Dickson (63yrs), a recently retired dentist from the UK is currently in New Zealand with his wife on a two month holiday planned specifically around the State Capital Classic Ocean Swim on 29 January in Wellington and the State Corsair Classic Ocean Swim in Christchurch on February 26. This will be Dickson's third year competing in the Christchurch event and second year competing in the Wellington event.

"What a great excuse to enjoy wonderful kiwi hospitality and stay fit," says an enthusiastic Dickson.

His daughter whom he credits with getting him into ocean swimming, lives in Australia and will fly over and join him for the Christchurch swim.

Melbourne Man, Greg Fountain (59yrs) has planned his trip to New Zealand around the Capital Classic swim. He had such a positive experience last year that he is returning again for the Wellington event. Fountain took up ocean swimming in 1990 and credits swimming with keeping his brain tumour at bay. He has previously competed in the Alcatraz Ocean Swim in the USA and regularly swims as part of a group called the 'Brighton Icebergers'.

His wife will be cheering him on in Wellington and the pair will include a South Island holiday in their itinerary.

Another swimmer jetting in for the Wellington Capital Classic is ex pat kiwi Cara Baker who is now living in Australia. Baker is considered a hot favourite for the event as Australasia's top ocean swimmer but will be in for some stiff local competition.

The 900 strong field of swimmers expected for Wellington's State Capital Classic will be predominately made up of non Wellingtonians. Many of those competing (both recreational and elite swimmers) have signed up for all six swims in the series which will see them travelling from the Bay Of Islands through to Christchurch. The Wellington event is the third

in the series which kicked off in Auckland in November. Following the Wellington swim on 29 January will be the Christchurch Corsair Classic on February 26, the Sand to Surf swim in Mt Maunganui 26 March and then the final event in Auckland on April 16.

For more information or to register visit www.oceanswim.co.nz