

Our Region

All creature comforts on hand

Former PE teacher, who owns and runs a farmstay, has landed a major tourism award

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Six years of hard work have paid off for Kylie Stewart who owns and runs the quaint and comfortable Rangitikei Farm Stay near Marton with her husband Andrew.

Former PE teacher Kylie won the New Zealand Enterprising Rural Women award for tourism last week at their National Conference in Christchurch.

At the award ceremony she gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation of the transformation from 2006 to 2011 of their farm, Tyrone, which has been in her husband's family since 1901.

"We are the fourth generation on the farm."

A world trip in 2007 made the couple realise just how lucky they were to live in New Zealand and that they could offer something special on their own farm.

"We realised that what, to us, was ordinary would be extraordinary for visitors. I mean, I was taking pictures of lions in Africa and now I'm watching people take pictures of sheep, and they love it."

While creating their farmstay they both continued working full-time, Kylie as the PE and health teacher at Wanganui Girls' College and Andrew as a farmer and journalist.

Setting the farm up as a charming farm stay was no easy task, but it has more than paid off.

When they had moved to the farm, the original homestead had been moved into the back yard in the 1980s to make room for a new homestead to be built.

There were also surplus out-buildings filled with old relics which have been used to create the rustic charm of the farmstay.

A round sawblade has been transformed into a wall clock, an old wooden ladder is now a magazine rack and framed pictures of the family weddings over the years are on display.

"We rescued and recycled everything ... we bought very little."

Today the farmstay sleeps 19 guests and attracts New Zealanders and overseas guests.

The business caters for school camp to busloads of tourists on a day trip and tourists who stay for a while for the experience.

"It is good for tourists to see what life is about on a New Zealand farm, and we're the only farmstay between Wellington and Taupo."

In the early days of the development they removed all but five trees in the existing garden to create bigger open areas and view across the farm and Makuhou Valley.

"Gardening has become a passion for me now that the



PRAISE: Kylie Stewart won the New Zealand Enterprising Rural Women award for tourism last week.



FARM LIVING: Friendly animals to feed in the paddock.

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Kylie Stewart

gardens are established."

The farmstay is self-catering with the old homestead set up with two bunk rooms, a party area, pool table, a small well equipped kitchen and a large outdoor deck.

"It's a great place for everyone to enjoy themselves."

Separate huts have that country chic feel, with en-suite bathrooms.

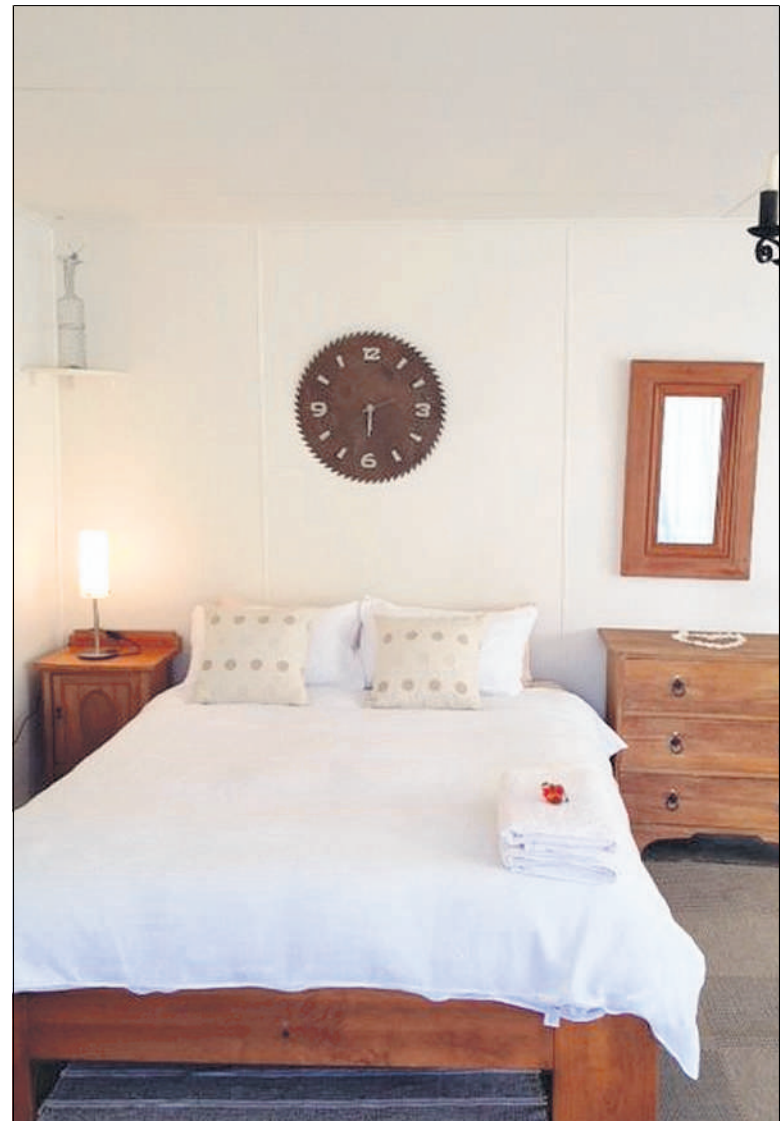
But the business goes beyond bringing in guests and running

the farm. A community fete featuring stalls, live music and gourmet food has raised money for a local tennis club, and the stage challenge for Girls' College.

There's no lack of things to do — from farm tours, shearing and mustering demonstrations to clay bird shooting, farm walks, hole-in-one golf, sambar deer hunting, horse and pony rides, feeding the friendly animals in the home paddock or taking a short walk to see glow-worms.

"We don't charge guests for any activities. I really enjoy taking them out and about."

As business owners in the local community, they donate accommodation vouchers for local fundraisers and auctions, they offered free accommodation to Christchurch families affected by the earthquake in 2011, have invited IHC groups in for free horse rides and to visit the animals and have hosted a Breast



ROOMY: Plenty of comfortable accommodation.

Cancer fundraising dinner.

"Our life here is pretty special."

Latest projects have been to develop a lake and set up a

vegetable gardens for guests to use.

"We're always coming up with new ideas. It's that kind of place — inspiring."