

'Net takes Tekapo to the world

■ New high-tech webcam

By David Bruce

Oamaru: Spectacular views of the Mackenzie Basin can now be viewed from the comfort of your home through a webcam on Mt John linked to the Internet.

After several months of testing, Tekapo Tourism's Greg Knowles is confident that through location and technology, Lake Tekapo now has "the best webcam in the world".

The new camera operates both as a standard webcam capturing regular images of the surrounding landscape and as an interactive camera in which visitors to the Tekapo Tourism website (www.tekapotourism.co.nz) can take control for a short period and instruct the camera what to look at.

A strong lens is able to view the dramatic landscape at a wide angle, or to zoom in on local icons with more detail than a standard pair of binoculars.

The new camera replaces Tekapo Tourism's original "fixed" webcam that overlooked the lake, island and Two Thumb Range for a year. Reliability issues plagued the original camera. Then scenic flight operators Air Safaris offered to sponsor a sophisticated and expensive new system.

The new location of the camera provides 240 degrees of uninterrupted views of the surrounding landscape.

Already, it has been viewed by approximately 70,000 visitors to the website.

Along with potential international and local visitors to Tekapo, the camera is also used by more specialised groups such as the Nagoya University in Japan, operators — in conjunction with the University of Canterbury — of the large telescope at the Mount John Observatory. Astronomers at the university use the camera to gauge the cloud cover in Tekapo prior to nightfall.

Pilots also use the camera to get a "bird's eye view" of the area bordering the Mount Cook National Park and potential passengers on scenic flights can view a sample of the Mackenzie Country scenery.



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Lofty view . . . Greg Knowles (up the ladder) and Tim Rayward (at the base) install the cabling and electronics for Tekapo's new webcam camera on Mt John which, through the Internet, will provide spectacular Mackenzie Basin views.