



MATCH-MAKER: Julia Charity will be matching travellers and hosts in the private accommodation sector through Look After Me.

PHOTO /
BEN FRASER

Travellers find private home away from home

By Julie Taylor
julie.taylor@dailypost.co.nz

An increasing number of visitors are turning to private accommodation in Rotorua. April alone saw a 25 per cent increase in international visitor nights in this sector, compared to April 2010, and the year to April figures increased by 14.9 per cent, demonstrating this was not a one-off event.

Domestic visitor nights in private homes held steady in April, resulting in a rise of 3.1 per cent for the year.

One Rotorua woman is taking advantage of this trend to launch an

online business linking travellers with private accommodation. Julia Charity is currently looking for hosts around New Zealand for the launch of www.lookafterme.co.nz on July 21.

Later this year, Ms Charity hopes to follow the general site with one specifically aimed at gay and lesbian travellers as she said there is still some discrimination against same sex couples. Look After Me does checks on hosts and travellers to minimise any risk and collects payment through its website.

The venture has been backed by Wellington investment company

Webfund Ltd and, once the New Zealand business is bedded in, Charity hopes to expand into Australia, then Asia and beyond.

Australians were the most significant contributors to the 39,912 international private accommodation nights in April, followed by people from the United Kingdom. Of the 72,092 domestic nights, Aucklanders and Waikatonians were the most common visitors. The average stay across domestic and international guests was 3.9 nights, more than double than the 1.7 nights for commercial accommodation.