



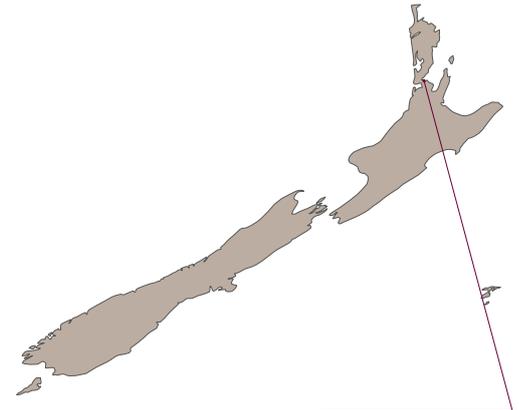
Ian Yeoman

The world's only professional futurologist specialising in travel and tourism, Ian Yeoman learned his trade as a scenario planner for VisitScotland. He's now an academic researcher at Victoria University of Wellington and leader on a tourism project for the New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development.

"In 2008, I migrated to New Zealand, where I was invited by the government," explains futurologist Ian Yeoman. "Tourism is a major income stream here, so it's taken very seriously. I'm constantly studying new trends – social, economic, political and technological. So, with the rise of smartphones, what's the future of museum visitor centres? The shared economy was an emerging trend back in 2008; now, that's the norm. Every scenario paints a picture of the future, and my job is to recommend how clients can thrive in it."

Yeoman was doing a PhD in operations research and scenario planning when his first role in futurism came up with VisitScotland. "I spent six years there doing economic modelling, environmental scanning and preparing future scenarios with contingency plans," he says. "We interviewed experts, like climatologists, who have a tacit feel for the future, and backed up their insight with facts and figures. Each long-term scenario had targets and ambitions, such as one that focused on making Scotland the world's leading destination for short breaks."

"Fifteen years ago, futurism wasn't around, but now scenario planning is a priority," he says. Tourism is a huge business, growing from 25 million international tourists in 1950 to an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. "Our boundaries are constantly changing, as science fiction is becoming a reality – what we term 'radical futures'," says Yeoman.



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"If driverless cars become prevalent, what does that mean for transport jobs like taxi drivers? We're even looking at commercial space travel (see page 58). It's important to have access to people in the know: I ask tech experts when the tipping point will come, when these innovations will cross over into the mainstream."

"But there's no point creating a future scenario unless people are prepared to action it, so I've worked to establish myself as a future of tourism guru. I've published 19 books and I'm writing three more, I'm doing a second doctorate, and I speak to numerous organisations around the world – for example, I talked about visitor attractions at Disney's conference last year, and I'm off to Malta to discuss the consequences of Brexit on European tourism. My personal ambition is to establish tourism futures as an academic subject at universities and then see it widely applied."

"The big trends now are climate change and sustainability, specific drivers like food tourism, and the experience economy. But each destination has to decide who it wants to be and what their opportunity is. I enjoy futurism because it's creative: there's an element of make-believe, thinking the unthinkable. To me it's about a holistic approach to the future, responsible leadership in tourism, and making the world a better place."

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