



# Travelling for gold

## Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports helps Paralympics New Zealand to beat COVID-19 and... bring home the gold!

Group travel is complex. Throw in a pandemic, a snap national lockdown, loads of special equipment and the responsibility of keeping New Zealand's Paralympians healthy and well, before they competed at the Tokyo Paralympics - and you have a moving feast of travel plans harder to navigate than a Japanese recipe for Fugu Puffer Fish.

Despite the challenges, Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports successfully flew the country's 71-member Paralympic team to Tokyo, where they competed and safely arrived home with 12 medals, six of which were gold.

Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sport's industry specialisation, experience in managing group travel itineraries and understanding of how to manage travel expertly during the pandemic created a seamless travel experience for Paralympics

NZ. The project involved close liaison and daily communication with travel industry suppliers, government authorities and the customer to ensure the Paralympic team could travel during a time when international travel was technically banned for most countries globally.

The Tokyo Paralympic Games were held 24 August to 5 September 2021 and included 22 Para sports with up to 4,400 Paralympians competing. Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports New Zealand was responsible for managing travel for 71 Paralympians.

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# THE TEAM

Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports has been working with Paralympics New Zealand (NZ) since 2017. Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports manages the organisation's air travel, hotel accommodation and car hire and was appointed to manage the team's travel and logistics for the Tokyo Paralympic Games, which went ahead at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing the travel and logistics for Paralympics NZ, from Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports was a highly experienced Travel and Account Manager, Sarah Bennett.

## Overcoming the warm-up challenges

To overcome the constantly changing national and international Covid-19 travel rules, Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports held daily meetings with the customer in the lead-up to the team's departure for the Games. This facilitated open and frequent communication between stakeholders, kept everyone up-to-date on managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) rules and where each sport was up to, in terms of itinerary bookings and trip management. The daily meetings also enabled stakeholders to make decisions quickly when travel, quarantine or visa changes were announced.

## Scenario planning

Part of Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sport's success was its approach to scenario planning. Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sport's pre-trip planning provided Paralympics NZ with all potential situations and solutions to ensure the team arrived in Tokyo on time, safely and in good health before competition started. Contingency plans including flight charters were key, especially for swimming and cycling athletes that attended pre-camps.

## Operating hours

The Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports team working on the project were available around-the-clock to deal with rapidly changing travel conditions. This was extremely helpful for Paralympics NZ, particularly during the snap national lockdown that occurred two days prior to the large group departing for Tokyo.

NZ went into hard lockdown 17 August 2021. That night Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports attended a meeting to talk through what was needed for the Paralympics team's departure including domestic connection changes, communications to each team and what was needed from New Zealand's Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for travel permissions.

Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports also devised a new plan for swimming and cycling athletes, who were based in Cambridge at their pre-camp and were due to travel to Auckland. A decision was made for the swimming and cycling teams to stay in Cambridge on the night of the 18th rather than take the transfer up to Auckland. The trip to Auckland was delayed until the day of their international departure. Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports made the itinerary changes that evening with the relevant travel suppliers and new plans were confirmed and ready for travellers within an hour.

## Leveraging strong supplier relationships

Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports tapped into its network of suppliers for Paralympics NZ to ensure any last-minute changes went ahead smoothly, special requests were granted and additional support was made available for the Paralympians.

Suppliers were briefed well in advance of the team's travel to ensure the health and safety of the Paralympians at all stages of their journey to Tokyo. This also included one airline representative ensuring the public on board the large group flight, was aware of the contact bubbles the national Paralympians required onboard the aircraft to Tokyo. At the start of the flight the pilot gave a friendly heads up to the public requesting they remained seated to minimise contact between passengers on the flight. Communication between suppliers ensured that the client's Duty of Care policies could be upheld on all international flights.

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## Travel management for the win

Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sport's valuable pre, during and post-trip support, liaison with suppliers and authorities such as MBIE, made it possible for Paralympics NZ to not only travel where and when they needed to during the Covid-19 lockdown but to travel safely and securely.

Paralympics NZ also benefited from Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports's

- strong supplier relationships and ability to negotiate with suppliers for waivers and favours
- frequent communication between stakeholders, virtually and in-person
- up-to-date and reliable travel, visa and MIQ advice
- flexible travel support from an Account Manager and Travel Consultants who made themselves available out of hours
- project management skills including the consolidation of invoices and post games analysis.

## The golden touch

As well as bringing home numerous medals, Paralympics NZ with help from Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports achieved **NZD \$80,000 in savings from supplier waivers** for the team's Tokyo trip.

This saving was made up of

- waivers for excess baggage for the team, which came to NZD \$67,791 across the two airlines the team travelled on internationally
- waivers for seat cancellation costs and associated fees, which saved NZD \$6,735.

The fact that Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports delivered significant savings for the customer at a time when travel industry suppliers weren't generating regular income as well as the seamless travel experience provided for the sports team is testament to the expertise and ability of Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports to overcome travel obstacles. This was specialist travel management at its finest!

**“** Your contribution to the Beijing team was outstanding and greatly appreciated, we acknowledge that this was not an easy assignment due to the strict regulations of entry and exit for Beijing. Nothing was ever an issue and always delivered with a smile on your face. We look forward to working with Corporate Traveller Stage, Screen & Sports as we continue our journey towards Paris 2024 and Milano Cortina 2026.”

The Team at Paralympics NZ

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