

# The Best of New Zealand

Back in 1979, New Zealand cartoonist and satirist Tom Scott, writing in *NZ Listener* magazine, had this to say about New Zealand: “Terrible tragedy in the South Seas. Three million people trapped alive.”

The big news in 2003 was that we hit the four million population mark, and more than half of that increase was due to immigration. (By 2009, that number climbed to 4.3 million.) Given that we have around 44 million sheep, one New Zealander still equates to a whole lot of fresh lamb. Look beyond the farm gate, though, and you’ll find we’ve caught up with the rest of the world. We may bob about at the bottom of the Southern Hemisphere, but it would be unfair to consider the country a backwater.

New Zealand continues to notch up big gains in tourism, welcoming more than two million visitors a year, despite international upheavals like terrorist attacks, flu epidemics, and economic downturns. Tourism is our largest source of overseas income. International visitors contribute NZ\$8.3 billion to the economy each year and the tourism sector at large contributes NZ\$19 billion to the country’s economy annually. One in every 10 New Zealanders now works in the tourism industry. And we’re better equipped for tourists than ever. Efficient visitor centers abound, with accommodations ranging from budget to exclusive. You can shop 7 days a week, whoop it up at clubs and bars 24 hours a day, or savor a glass of internationally recognized New Zealand wine in an inexpensive café. You can get real coffee in as many variations as you can imagine, and New Zealand’s fresh, innovative cuisine will leave you breathless and begging for more. Even provincial New Zealand has pulled up its socks without losing its heart. Small-town pride is beaming, and farmers are turning their hands to boutique tour operations and gorgeous restored B&Bs to supplement farm incomes, changing the whole nature of many backwater rural districts. Yet you’ll still find, at its core, the very Kiwi hospitality that has made this country famous.

You may have heard that New Zealanders are born wearing wet suits and carrying paddles, such is their appetite for the outdoors and adventure. No part of the country is more than 128km (79 miles) from the sea, and a coastline spread with splendid beaches dishes up thousands of beautiful coastal walks and chances to surf and soak in the sun.

New Zealand is also a winter magnet for international skiers and is the white-knuckle capital of the world. This is where you can push it to the limits, pit yourself against your fears and limitations, take risk by the throat, and go for it—leaping off bridges into surging river gorges attached to a giant rubber band, or taking a stab at luge, Zorbing, sky diving, paragliding, kayaking, white-water rafting, and jet-boating. There’s no lack of invention when it comes to adrenaline-pumping activities in this country.

But you don’t have to be an extreme athlete to enjoy New Zealand. There are just as many ways to be laid-back and indulgent—tour wineries that have stampeded their way to the top of world ratings in record time; take in the wealth of Polynesian and Maori culture that forms the backbone of an increasingly multicultural society; or check out the strong historic and architectural reminders of a colonial past. There are lush gardens, art

galleries, museums, and plenty of one-off reminders that New Zealand is like no other place.

I was born in New Zealand and despite frequent trips overseas, I can't shake off the inherent sense of belonging here. This book presents "my" New Zealand. After many months traveling thousands of miles, testing mattresses, comparing prices, leaping off cliff tops (well, almost),

speeding up rivers, and eating and drinking in far too many restaurants, I am more convinced than ever that New Zealand is one of the quirkiest, quaintest, craziest places on earth. It's one of the most favored destinations of the new millennium, and before you've even left here, you'll want to come back. Dip into these pages, and you'll see why.

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## 1 THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

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- **Swim with Sharks:** You've got to be keen, I admit, but this can be done in perfect safety. You can come face to face with *Jaws's* South Seas cousins in a tough metal cage in a knuckle-biting thrill just north of Gisborne. See "Gisborne & the East Cape" in chapter 10.
- **Explore a Glacial Lake:** There are few things as mind-blowing as taking a boat trip on Tasman Lake, on Aoraki/Mount Cook, sailing between towering ice cliffs and floating icebergs in total, surreal silence. It's one of only three places in the world you can do a tour like this, so don't miss it. See "Mount Cook" on p. 438 in chapter 16.
- **Whale-Watch in Kaikoura:** When a mighty sperm whale flaps its tail at you, you won't forget it in a hurry. These big sea monsters come to this particular stretch of water for a marine habitat rich in their kind of plankton. Don't be surprised to see dolphins aplenty, too. See "Marine Experiences in Kaikoura" on p. 400 in chapter 14.
- **Take the Train:** Rated one of the five most spectacular train journeys in the world, the TranzAlpine is an easy day trip that gives a dramatic introduction to the splendor of South Island landscapes. Tunnels, beech forests, viaducts, massive river gorges—they're all there for the taking. See "An Unforgettable Train Trip" on p. 385 in chapter 14.
- **Eat Bugs and Beetles at the Wildfoods Festival:** Prime yourself! You'll need culinary fortitude for this mind-boggling event—you could be served up anything from wriggling grubs to the unmentionable body parts of a number of wild and not-so-wild animals. This is the West Coast at its most rugged best. See the "Wildfoods Festival" box on p. 416 in chapter 15.
- **Stalk Kiwis at Night:** And I mean the birds! Get ready for surprises on this little southern adventure. It's the only place in the country where you can creep about lonely beaches at night with flashlights and stealth and not get arrested! At the same time, you'll be one of the lucky few who get to see a wild kiwi foraging for its supper among the seaweed. See "Making a Date with a Kiwi" on p. 509 in chapter 17.
- **Walk Around Sky Tower:** And I mean from the top, not at ground level. See how brave you really are when it comes to walking around the thin perimeter ring of one of the tallest towers in the Southern Hemisphere. The fearless will be rewarded with amazing views; the terrified can cower inside the viewing level. See "Sky Jump" on p. 142 in chapter 6.



- **Visit a Maori Marae:** Experience the *hongi* (the formal nose-to-nose Maori greeting), see deeply moving song-and-dance performances, and eat from a traditional underground *hangi* (oven). Do this in Rotorua as part of an organized

tour experience, or seek permission to visit one of the dozens of East Cape *marae* (village common). See “Rotorua” in chapter 9 and “Gisborne & the East Cape” in chapter 10.

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## 2 THE BEST BEACHES

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- **Waiheke Island’s Onetangi Bay:** Stand on the bay’s wide stretch of golden sand, and you can see for miles. On a clear day, throw yourself down into the sand and gaze at the steep pinnacles of Great Barrier Island and Little Barrier, off in the hazy distance. There might even be a few glimpses of the Coromandel in between deliciously warm swims. See “A Side Trip to Waiheke Island” in chapter 6.
- **Karikari Peninsula’s Beaches:** This is the Far North at its subtropical best—endless sweeps of sparkling white sand lapped by crystal-clear, azure-blue waters. And from Tokerau Beach to Rangiputa to Matai Bay, you could have miles of it to yourself for beachcombing, sunbathing, and swimming (with care). See “Bay of Islands & the Far North” in chapter 7.
- **Coopers Beach:** Partly shaded by a bank of red-embazoned pohutukawa trees, how could you not be content to stretch out here? Exercise? A walk to the water should do it! See “Bay of Islands & the Far North” in chapter 7.
- **Hot Water Beach:** Don’t ask me why, or how, but if you get here 2 hours before or after low tide, you can hollow out a spot on the beach for yourself, and then wait for natural hot water to seep up through the sand. A natural spa experience

without paying a cent! See “The Coromandel Peninsula” in chapter 7.

- **Mount Maunganui’s Ocean Beach:** Surf, sand, and sun—some people never want more than that. Throw on a bit of suntan lotion, a pair of sunglasses, and a skimpy swimsuit, and you’ll be able to mix in with the best of the bronzed bodies that make an annual pilgrimage to this perennial beach and surf favorite. See “Tauranga & Bay of Plenty” in chapter 8.
- **Kaiteriteri Beach:** Half of Canterbury makes a beeline for these blissful shores every summer. It’s not expansive—in fact it’s quite small, but perfectly formed nonetheless, and there’s a busy vacation atmosphere with packed campgrounds and holiday houses. And with Nelson’s endless hours of sunshine, who could complain about size? See “Nelson, Richmond & Motueka” in chapter 13.
- **Abel Tasman National Park’s Beaches:** Bush-wrapped and locked between rocky headlands, these idyllic golden patches from Marahau north to Totaranui are accessible by sea only. That’s what makes them so special. Gliding through the turquoise waters in your sea kayak, with curious seals to keep you company, you can take your pick of isolated havens. See “Abel Tasman National Park & Golden Bay” in chapter 13.

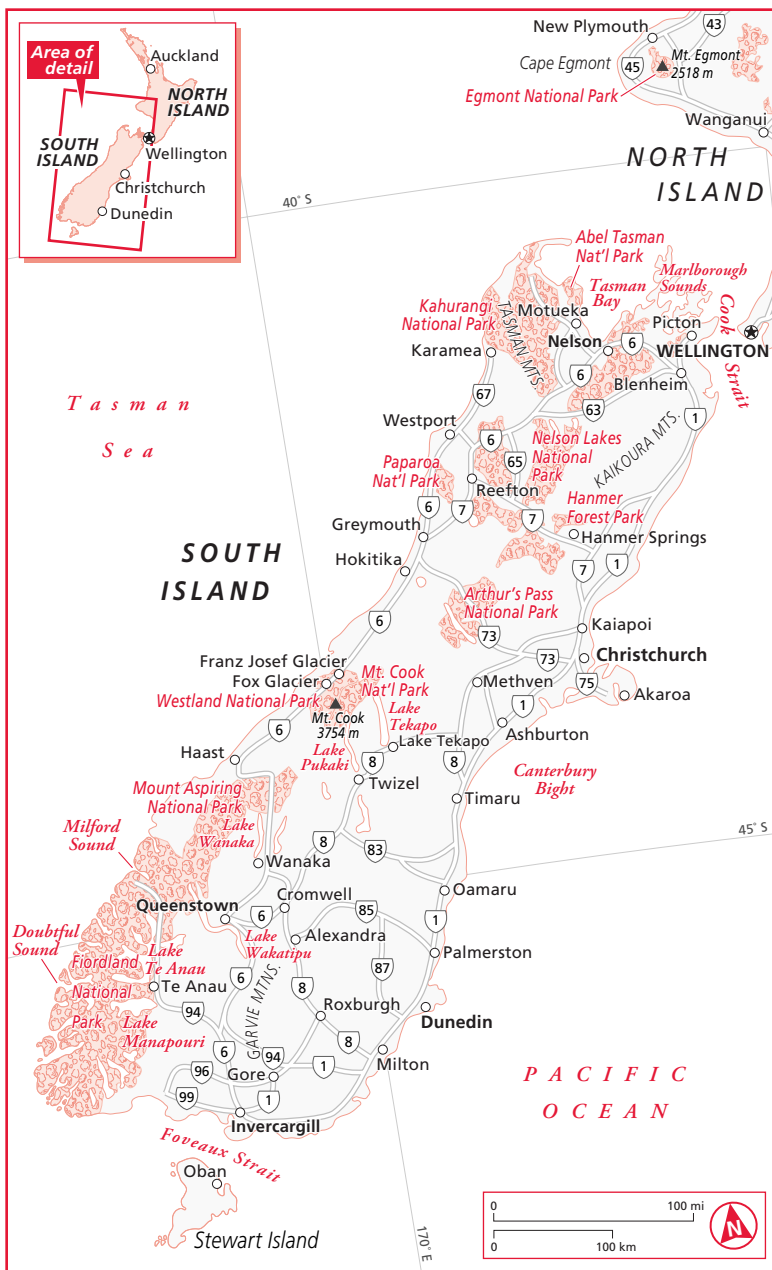
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## 3 THE BEST ACTIVE VACATIONS

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- **Scuba Diving in the Poor Knights:** Jacques Yves Cousteau rated this among

the best diving spots in the world. This unique marine reserve has the best of



- tropical currents sweeping in to make it warm and inviting for a wide variety of tropical species that aren't found anywhere else in New Zealand's waters. See "Into the Deep Blue Sea" on p. 189.
- **Blackwater Rafting in the Waitomo Glowworm Caves:** Daredevils can now go underground to leap off waterfalls; slink through dark, damp, underground waterways; rappel off Lost World rock faces; and do other things in the dark. See "Hamilton & the Waikato" in chapter 8.
  - **Trout Fishing in Taupo:** They say the fish in Lake Taupo are so big that when you catch one, the lake level drops. The dozens of other rivers (especially world-renowned Tongariro) and streams in the region also have rich pickings for the fisherman. See "Taupo" in chapter 9.
  - **Sea Kayaking in Abel Tasman National Park:** It takes a lot to beat this balmy little paddle into the best-preserved and most beautiful coastline of New Zealand. Keep company with nosy seal pups and dolphins; call into pristine, deserted beaches; and explore rocky headlands. See "Abel Tasman National Park & Golden Bay" in chapter 13.
  - **Walking the Glaciers:** Dig out those snow boots and walking poles, add a dash of nerve and daring, and take the walk of a lifetime down Fox or Franz Josef glaciers in the deep south. And don't forget your camera so you can bring home those unforgettable views into the snow caves. See "Franz Josef & Fox Glaciers" in chapter 15.
  - **Getting Wild in Queenstown:** This is New Zealand's adrenaline capital, where you get more than one chance to show how crazy you really are. There are more daredevil stunts per square inch here than anywhere else in the country. An international skiing mecca in winter, it readily transforms itself into summer madness as well. See "Queenstown" in chapter 16.
  - **Walking the Fiordland Tracks:** If you fancy yourself as a multiday trumper, there's plenty to keep you out of mischief in Fiordland. This is where you get some of the best walks in the world—the Milford, the Hollyford, the Kepler, and the Routeburn tracks. See "Tramping" in chapter 5 and "Te Anau" in chapter 16.

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## 4 THE BEST OF NATURAL NEW ZEALAND

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- **Ninety Mile Beach and Cape Reinga:** From the spiritual tip of the North Island where, Maori say, the souls of the dead depart, to mountainous sand dunes, quicksand, and the broad flat stretch of Ninety Mile Beach, this is a must-see area filled with the unexpected. See "Bay of Islands & the Far North" in chapter 7.
- **Waiotapu Thermal Wonderland:** The earth's molten core hints at its artistic potential in a veritable rainbow of color and steamy chaos manifested in geysers, mud pools, hot bubbling lakes, steamy terraces, and more. A photographer's paradise, but tread carefully. See "Bubble, Toil & Trouble: The Geothermal Attractions" on p. 224.
- **Tongariro National Park:** Three major volcanoes dominate a rugged central plateau landscape: Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe. An indomitable threesome, they're rife with Maori legend and rich in a few modern stories as well. Great for skiers, trampers, and anyone else wanting a physical challenge. See "Tongariro National Park" in chapter 9.
- **Fox and Franz Josef Glaciers:** This is one of the very few places on earth where you'll find full-fledged glaciers this close to the ocean. In a slow, ever-onward creep, they make their way from the

heights of the Southern Alps down into untouched rainforest. See “Franz Josef & Fox Glaciers” in chapter 15.

- **Fiordland:** Come here on a wet day (and that’s easy because this place gets the most rainfall in New Zealand), and you’ll think you’ve stepped into the living set of *The Lord of the Rings*. This place defies all superlatives. It is the ultimate must-see. See “Te Anau” in chapter 16.
- **The Catlins Coast:** This is wild, natural New Zealand at its unspoiled best. From unique fossil forests to all manner of seabirds and mammals, native bush,

waterfalls, wild beaches, unforgettable tangles of driftwood, and a frustratingly changeable climate—the area takes a lot of beating, but the resulting dramatic impact is unforgettable. See “Dunedin” in chapter 17.

- **Ulva Island:** Tucked into Stewart Island’s Paterson Inlet, tiny Ulva Island will leave you speechless with its incredible native bird life. It’s wall-to-wall feathers here—and what’s more, they’re not afraid of humans. Don’t go without your camera; you’ll need evidence once you start telling friends back home about it. See “Stewart Island” in chapter 17.

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## 5 THE BEST TRAMPS

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For details, see “Tramping” in chapter 5.

- **Tongariro Crossing:** Often described as one of the best 1-day walks in New Zealand, this high-altitude hike across volcanic terrain will give you cold mountain springs, lava flows, an active crater, emerald-colored crater lakes, and unforgettable views. Ideal for the fit and enthusiastic hiker. See “Tongariro National Park” in chapter 9.
- **The Abel Tasman Coastal Track:** This is an easy 3- to 5-day walk where the guided option gives you the choice of ditching those hefty packs. From start to finish, 52km (32 miles) later, it winds in and out of gorgeous sheltered coves, golden beaches, rocky headlands, and natural unspoiled bush. See “Abel Tasman National Park & Golden Bay” in chapter 13.
- **The Heaphy Track:** No softy guided options here: You go it alone for 4 to 6 days from the junction of the Brown and Aorere rivers, across tussock-covered flats to the wild seas of Karamea on the West Coast. See “Westport & Karamea” in chapter 15.
- **The Milford Track:** The mother of them all, the Milford is one of the world’s best and most-loved multiday tramps. Stretching through the best of Fiordland, this 54km (33-mile) trail follows the Clinton and Arthur valleys and crosses McKinnon Pass with views you’ll never forget. See “Te Anau” in chapter 16.
- **The Routeburn Track:** Like the Milford and the Hollyford before it, this track makes its way into virgin rainforest and the sort of wild fairyland scenery where you’d expect to see elves and gnomes prancing around. See “Queens-town” in chapter 16.
- **The North West Circuit:** This is a real test for experienced trampers who think they can face 10 to 12 days walking 125km (78 miles) through bird-filled native bush, big beaches, and long stretches knee-deep in mud. I’m told the rewards are plenty. See “Stewart Island” in chapter 17.

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## 6 THE BEST VIEWS

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- **Sky Tower:** The paramount city view in not only New Zealand, but also the entire Southern Hemisphere. Once you get out of that glass-faced lift 328m (1,076 ft.) above the city, you'll know just what I mean. Fabulous 360-degree views of Auckland unfold below, and you can test your courage by walking over glass floors! See p. 141.
- **Hicks Bay:** Stop at the high point above Hicks Bay before you descend into Te Araroa to see New Zealand's largest pohutukawa tree and the East Cape Lighthouse. Resting awhile, high up between the two bays, see if you can imagine Captain Cook's expression when he first sighted the area, and his relief to be leaving again after a tragic Maori massacre in which one European was killed and eaten on his wedding night. See "Gisborne & the East Cape" in chapter 10.
- **Hastings's Te Mata Peak:** A big "sleeping giant" of a hill, 393m (1,289-ft.) high, Te Mata affords big views of endless green and brown undulations, reaching all the way to the coast. Havelock North, Hastings, and Napier all blend together below. See "Hawke's Bay" in chapter 10.
- **Wellington's Kelburn Cable Car:** Not so far above the capital's busy shopping streets, you'll be rewarded with postcard-perfect vistas of glass-faced high-rises silhouetted against the harbor. Step off the cute red cable car into the verdant acres of the Botanical Gardens and look seaward. No matter what the weather, the view is always memorable. See p. 307.
- **Queenstown's Skyline Gondola:** It's everybody's aim to get high in Queenstown one way or another. Make yours by way of a smooth gondola ride to the top of Bob's Peak. Step out into the cool, crisp, exceedingly fresh air with New Zealand's playground spread out at your feet. The Remarkables will keep the view in check, and Lake Wakatipu will be a big blue basin below. See "Queenstown" in chapter 16.
- **Nugget Point:** You may not have seen another human being for hours by the time you make your way to the lookout above Nugget Point. And once you've experienced the blissful solitude of standing on this wild, wind-swept Catlins promontory, you probably won't care if you don't see anyone for several more. Thick, swirling masses of kelp, seals, penguins, and seabirds are here by the hundreds. See "Dunedin" in chapter 17.

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## 7 THE BEST DRIVES

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- **Auckland City to Mission Bay:** This is the stuff of a weekend afternoon spin to see how the other half lives. Best done in a Ferrari, a BMW, an Audi, or an equally cool classic if you want to leave a lasting impression. Tight shorts and in-line skates do the trick just as well if you want a cheaper set of wheels. Do the cafe crawl; join the walkers, the runners, and the dog strollers; or just drool over million-dollar real estate. See "Orientation" in chapter 6.
- **Rotorua's Blue and Green Lakes:** From the stately redwood forest on the edge of town, all the way past the Blue and Green lakes to the Buried Village and Lake Tarawera and back again, you'll squeal with delight at a dozen different things. There are lots of picnic spots on the way, but the Landing Café at Lake Tarawera is



a good bet if you forget the hamper. See “Rotorua” in chapter 9.

- **The Capital to Mellow Martinborough:** Once you’ve left the motorways behind, you’ll be up and over the winding Rimutaka Hill Road in little more than 40 minutes. Then it’s downhill all the way to Martinborough’s enchanting pocket of prizewinning wineries. Surrender to hedonism and squander time in idyllic vineyard settings. Make the only exercise you do raising your glass, or at most a wee stroll through pretty little Martinborough Village, where cute shops await. See “A Side Trip to Wairarapa” in chapter 12.
- **Queen Charlotte Sound:** Take the scenic loop from Picton to the little fishing village of Havelock and back to Picton on the main highway. Stop and admire the bush-clad sounds and the boats, and indulge in fresh green-lipped mussels grown in these very waters at the Mussel Boys restaurant, in Havelock. It’s a narrow winding road around the Sounds, so take it quietly. See “Picton & Blenheim” in chapter 13.
- **Greymouth to Westport:** Pretty, pretty, pretty! Nikau palms, native bush, tree ferns, jagged rocks, roaring surf, and the big blue Tasman Sea combine to make this a lovely half-day outing. Be sure to stop at the famous Punakaiki Pancake Rocks, where blowholes have a spectacular hissy fit as the ocean roars into, under, and around rocky caverns on the coast. See “Westport & Karamea” in chapter 15.
- **The Famous Milford Road:** Even the Wanaka-Haast road can’t match the splendor of this one. It’s been called one of the best drives in the world, and no amount of raving can do it justice. You really have to experience it. Virgin rain-forest, mirrorlike lakes, astounding waterfalls (especially during rain), beech forest, mountains of moss, bright orange lichens, and sheer mountain faces thousands of feet high contribute to the overall picture—not to mention the slightly daunting Homer Tunnel. See “Milford Sound” in chapter 16.

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## 8 THE BEST GARDENS

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- **Hamilton Gardens:** Stretched along the banks of the Waikato River, this blissful, relatively new 58-hectare (143-acre) reserve is a lovely place to wander and picnic. Development began around 30 years ago; there’s now a well-established Asian garden, English garden, herb and scented gardens, and lavish stands of trees. See “Hamilton & the Waikato” in chapter 8.
- **Eastwoodhill Arboretum:** One of the most magical places in the country, hardly a garden by normal standards, this astounding collection—the best in New Zealand—is one man’s life’s work and presents over 3,500 species often studied by international scientists. Go in autumn for unforgettable color displays—and bring a camera. See “Gisborne & the East Cape” in chapter 10.
- **Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust:** Here you get a world-class collection of rhododendrons, viraya, and azaleas set in a centuries-old forest near Mount Egmont—our little Mount Fuji. The gardens spread over many acres in a lovely rural setting 30 minutes from New Plymouth. See “New Plymouth: Gateway to Egmont National Park” in chapter 11.
- **Christchurch’s Botanic Gardens:** Regardless of the season, this central-city acreage has plenty to offer, but it’s quintessentially Christchurch when the

daffodils and bluebells bloom under the huge oak trees along the Avon River and avenues of weeping cherries burst into color. This is when people think of England. See p. 376.

- **Mona Vale:** This little beauty is often overlooked in favor of the city's Botanical Gardens, but it has an intimate charm all its own. Spreading out around a stately Victorian home, these public gardens have myriad lovely features, including iris collections along stream banks, fountains, hostas by the yard, and that old favorite, the rose, which does so well in Canterbury. See "Exploring Christchurch" in chapter 14.
- **Ohinetahi:** If you're a garden fan, this is a must. Formal, architectural, and

stately are all words that instantly spring to mind. Definitely English-inspired and modeled after the best of England's stately gardens, with quirky New Zealand modifications. See "Exploring Christchurch" in chapter 14.

- **Dunedin Chinese Garden:** Here is an unexpected chance to see one of just three truly authentic Chinese gardens created outside of China. Built in Shanghai by Chinese artisans, the garden was dismantled and then shipped to Dunedin, where it was reconstructed under the supervision of Chinese craftsmen. This is a beautiful addition to this southern city's quirky list of attractions. See "Parks & Gardens" on p. 486.

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## 9 THE BEST MUSEUMS

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- **Auckland Museum:** After a very significant internal revamp, this museum is everything you'd want in a city's storehouse of treasures: fun, interactive, attractive, informative, and filled with interesting collections. Its Maori and Polynesian section, the biggest in the world, sends shivers down your spine; if you've got kids, let them loose in the Discovery Centre, where they can legally stick their fingers into just about anything. See p. 140 in chapter 6.
- **New Zealand National Maritime Museum:** At the pinnacle of New Zealand's boating history—with the America's Cup Challenge right in our backyard—the Maritime Museum is booming. Look for *KZI* outside, and inside discover 1,000 years of the country's maritime history. See sail makers, boat builders, and wood-turners at work and take a cruise on one of the vessels. See p. 144 in chapter 6.
- **Museum of New Zealand—Te Papa Tongarewa:** One of the largest national

museums in the world, this giant new edifice on Wellington's waterfront is said to be 5 years ahead of anything else like it. Truly bicultural, it's a magical place where art and artifacts meet technological brilliance, creating riveting displays and interactive playthings for all ages. You'll find everything from a whale skeleton and a working Maori marae to art collections and virtual-reality diversions. See p. 306 in chapter 12.

- **Canterbury Museum and the International Antarctic Centre:** Although these two museums are completely separate entities located miles apart, together they present a terrific overview of life and history in Antarctica. Nowhere else in the world will you find this much gathered information about the great icy continent. There's everything from wildlife displays to human exploration accounts and a real ice chamber so you can get the feel of life in subzero temperatures. See p. 375 and p. 376 in chapter 14.

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## 10 THE BEST MAORI EXPERIENCES

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- **Auckland Museum:** This is the perfect place for an early lesson in things Maori. The recently revamped museum has the largest collection of Maori artifacts in the world. Large war canoes, meetinghouses, greenstone weapons, and feather cloaks are here. On top of that, the Manaia Maori Performance Group puts on a stunning show three times a day. See p. 140.
- **Te Puia's Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve and New Zealand Maori Arts & Crafts Institute:** Maori guides will lead you through the thermal reserve, explaining the significance of the area to the Maori people. There's also a live song-and-dance performance, a tour of a replica Maori village, and the chance to watch working weavers and carvers in the Arts & Crafts Institute, which was set up in 1963 to foster traditional craft skills. See p. 221.
- **Tamaki Maori Village:** This re-created ancient Maori village presents Maori life as it used to be pre-European settlement. You'll tour the village with a Maori elder, learn the ancient myths, watch a traditional performance, and eat from a traditional hangi. See "Rotorua" in chapter 9.
- **Whakarewarewa Thermal Village:** This small village of just 70 or so people has a 300-year history of settlement. It's probably the only place in the world where people live in such proximity to geothermal activity and still harness the natural forces of the earth for washing and cooking. See "Rotorua" in chapter 9.
- **East Cape:** This is a remote enclave of Maori culture—one of the last places in New Zealand where the Maori language is part of everyday life. You'll find more than 100 marae scattered along the length of the East Cape Road, and if you ask permission, in most cases you'll be allowed to enter. There are numerous Maori settlements and highly decorative Maori churches. See "Gisborne & the East Cape" in chapter 10.

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## 11 THE BEST B&BS

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- **A-Kahu** (Rotorua; ☎ 07/347-4148): I had one of the best B&B stays in New Zealand with Kiri Atkinson-Crean and her husband Nigel Crean—a young, contemporary Maori couple, who will give you a real insight into what it means to be Maori in modern New Zealand. On top of that, their beds and rooms are divine, the food is fantastic, and there is laughter aplenty. See p. 231.
- **Booklovers Bed and Breakfast** (Wellington; ☎ 04/384-2714): Journalist and author Jane Tolerton is a woman with a passion for history and the astonishing book collection to prove it. Her charming city villa bulges with books and her rooms are large, comfortable, and close to town. See p. 299.
- **Glendinning House** (Dunedin; ☎ 03/477-8262): Sandy Black and Jocelyn Robinson live in an elegant brick mansion in the nicest part of town. Jocelyn, a former caterer, tempts guests with ongoing edible treats. Rooms are huge and are the perfect place to imagine life as a wealthy colonialist. See p. 493.
- **Elgin House** (Dunedin; ☎ 03/453-0004): Roger and Carolyn Rennie have mastered the art of spoiling their guests, and their gorgeous old three-story home is riddled with character, history, charm, and hospitality. Don't miss it! See p. 492.
- **Pencarrow** (Queenstown; ☎ 03/442-8938): You'll have to completely revise your benchmark for service and value

for money after staying with Bill and Kari Moers. They give a whole new meaning to guest comforts, and I think they should give lessons to B&Bs everywhere. See p. 458.

- **Waiorau Homestead** (Wanaka; ☎ 03/443-2225): Get a taste of the country in this beautifully restored homestead, where chef Blyth Adams and his wife, Ann Lockhart, will spoil you rotten. Modern comforts prevail against a

backdrop of rural history and spectacular scenery. See p. 436.

- **Maison de la Mer** (Akaroa; ☎ 03/304-8907): If you want to know how a top B&B should be run, visit the experts. Bruce and Carol Hyland have hosted over 14,000 guests during their tenure in the hospitality industry, and their new Akaroa venture is as luscious as their last. You'd be silly to miss it. See p. 395.

## 12 THE BEST LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Kauri Cliffs** (Kerikeri; ☎ 09/407-0010): I could find no fault whatsoever with this sublime northern retreat. It is, as the saying goes, "heaven on a stick," and I'm not even a golfer! The staff here are some of the friendliest in the country and the rooms—especially the bathrooms—are my idea of true luxury. See p. 184.
- **Eagles Nest** (Russell; ☎ 09/403-8333): Combine the very best of international taste with the magic of Northland's subtropical environment and a rich vein of natural energy, and you get a luxury retreat quite unlike any other in New Zealand. Daniel and Sandie Biskind have created a world-class retreat worthy of anyone's prolonged attention. See p. 184.
- **Huka Lodge** (Taupo; ☎ 07/378-5791): Exclusivity reigns supreme at this Small Luxury Hotels of the World member. International awards bounce off the walls, and guests invariably comment on rooms fit for kings. It has a supreme location beside the Waikato River just above the Huka Falls and a reputation for quality and service that seems impossible to shake. See p. 242.
- **Treetops Lodge & Estate** (Rotorua; ☎ 07/333-2066): My expectations may never be the same again after staying at Treetops. Being spoiled with one of the most gorgeous suites in the country tends to have that effect. Set in a

unique native bush environment, it's a true sanctuary that will lower your heart rate within minutes of arriving. See p. 230.

- **The Farm at Cape Kidnappers** (Hawke's Bay; ☎ 06/875-1900): Like its big sister, Kauri Cliffs, this stay richly deserves all the superlatives. It's a case of "your wish is our command" here and if you're a golfer, you'll love what is rated the 10th best course in the world outside the U.S. The cliff-edge, rural setting is to die for. See p. 269.
- **Eichardt's Private Hotel** (Queenstown; ☎ 03/441-0450): This new Small Luxury Hotels of the World member has received glowing accolades in Andrew Harper's *Hideaway Report*, and it's becoming the hotel of choice for discerning, upscale travelers. In a remodeled historic building in central Queenstown, it oozes first-class style and understated glamour. It remains one of my favorites. See p. 457.
- **Blanket Bay** (Queenstown; ☎ 03/442-9442): If you want luxury on a grand scale in a majestic setting to match, look no further than Blanket Bay. These gorgeous stone buildings marry so completely with the awesome landscape, it seems as if they were always here. Inside, you'll find an outstanding level of service and comfort. What more could you want? See p. 462.

## 13 THE BEST BOUTIQUE HOTELS & SMALL LODGES

- **Te Whau Lodge** (Waiheke Island; ☎ 09/372-2288): Every time I visit Te Whau I'm convinced all over again that Gene O'Neill and Liz Eglinton give you the best of everything—winning personalities, fabulous food, great rooms, and views you won't believe. There's something quintessentially Kiwi about the whole experience that I'm proud to recommend. See p. 165.
- **Ridge Country Retreat** (Tauranga; ☎ 07/542-1301): The generosity and style of rooms here leave many more expensive stays in the shade. Joanne O'Keeffe and Penny Oxnam were some of the best (and funniest) hosts on my last road trip, and I'm confident your expectations will be exceeded at every level. The food is divine! See p. 213.
- **Millar Road** (Hastings; ☎ 06/875-1977): Waking up to staggering views over vineyards, orchards, and rolling green hills is only part of the pleasure of this exquisite stay. Somewhere between lodge and B&B, these two modern, self-contained "cottages" are divine. I can't get the memory of them out of my head. It's a classy, unexpected gem filled with contemporary New Zealand art, and I know you'll want to stay at least a week! See p. 270.
- **Ohtel** (Wellington; ☎ 04/803-0600): I couldn't believe my luck when I found this small, chic, ecofriendly, waterfront hotel packed to the gills with collectible mid-century modern furniture. It's an unbeatable value, a total sensory experience, and one of my top picks for something unique and memorable. See p. 300.
- **Arrowtown House** (Arrowtown; ☎ 03/441-6008): This brand-new boutique hotel is the third brainchild of seasoned travelers and hosts alike, Steve and Jeanette Brough, who are two of the best hosts in the country. Located in a pretty, tree-lined residential street, it's an understated haven within a short walk of the village. See p. 461.
- **River Birches** (Turangi; ☎ 0800/102-025): This is one of my favorite new discoveries. Transplanted New Yorker Jason Bleibtreu and his wife Rebecca—both former journalists covering the world's hot spots—have spent years living in hotels, so they know exactly what it takes to create a restful haven. They've imbued this special place with an extra level of professionalism that's hard to fault. And the location? Right beside one of the best trout-fishing rivers in the world! See p. 245.
- **Remarkables Lodge** (Queenstown; ☎ 03/442-2720): Brian Savage and Colleen Ryan sailed the world for 10 years chartering their yacht. We can be thankful they came ashore in Queenstown and took this well-established lodge and shook it by the scruff of the neck. With new life and an understated level of class that puts it above many, it's a top retreat tucked into the foot of the very remarkable Remarkables mountains. See p. 460.

## 14 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **White** (Auckland; ☎ 09/978-2000): Named for its stunning minimal all-white interior, White is the handiwork of celebrated consulting chef Luke Mangan, who owns the award-winning restaurant Salt in Sydney. Its best feature

- is the Table, a big informal table for diners who like the idea of mixing with others over an outstanding meal. See p. 135.
- **The French Café** (Auckland; ☎ 09/377-1911): This is posh-plush (in an elegant, understated kind of way) and professionalism-plus. Consistently rated one of Auckland's best and most romantic restaurants, this little den will take your taste buds to new, dizzying heights. See p. 135.
  - **DINE By Peter Gordon** (Auckland; ☎ 09/363-7030): This sleek, dimly lit culinary "palace" is the new playground of London/New Zealand celebrity chef Peter Gordon. Set in the new SKYCITY Grand Hotel, it's fusion cuisine at its best. Just make sure you save a few good breaths for gasping at the bill. See p. 135.
  - **Logan Brown** (Wellington; ☎ 04/801-5114): Located in a restored bank building on the edge of the red-light district, this restaurant is guaranteed to exceed your expectations. Consistently voted one of the capital's best eateries—for its service and its delicious focus on top meat cuts and wild game—it shouldn't be bypassed. See p. 301.
  - **Herzog** (Blenheim; ☎ 03/572-8770): Expect the very best from this winery and restaurant that has been held up by New York's *Wine Spectator* for its impressive stock of around 3,200 of the world's best wines. It's a fine-dining experience you won't forget in a hurry. See p. 334.
  - **Rotherams** (Christchurch; ☎ 03/341-5142): Swiss-born chef Martin Weiss has mastered the art of stunning his hungry patrons. In an interior that's all about romance and special occasions, he presents meals that excel in both presentation and taste. Not to be missed—likewise the extensive wine list. See p. 372.
  - **The Bunker** (Queenstown; ☎ 03/441-8030): Don't start celebrating until you've actually found it and are sitting at one of its tables! Notoriously hard to find (that's part of its charm), and expensive when you get there, this hidden culinary jewel delivers on all the superlatives it receives. Make sure you hunt it down. See p. 464.

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## 15 THE BEST SHOPPING

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- **Auckland:** The whole city is a treasure-trove of shops. Try the chic fashion and design shops of High Street; international designers duty-free at DFS Galleria Customhouse; upmarket boutiques in Parnell; antiques on Manukau Road; mainstream fashion in Newmarket—plus the super-classy Nuffield Street and its top designer labels; big mall shopping at St. Luke's Shopping Centre; and fabulous specialty shops on K'Road and Ponsonby Road. See "Shopping" in chapter 6.
- **Rotorua:** A rich vein of New Zealand souvenirs runs right through the whole city, but for the best Maori arts and crafts, look to Tamaki Maori Village. See "Rotorua" in chapter 9.
- **Wellington:** The Old Bank Building on Lambton Quay has only added to the electric atmosphere of this capital shopping area. Wander the length of the Quay for fashion, books, shoes, and more; move up through Willis Street for more of the same, and into Cuba Mall for edgy design stores and off-the-wall retail surprises. Check out Tinakori Road for a handsome cluster of boutiques. See "Shopping" in chapter 12.
- **Nelson:** Long recognized as the best region for leisure crafts shopping, greater Nelson is dotted with hundreds

of pottery, craft, and jewelry studios. Find international-quality art glass at Höglund Art Glass Studio and go from there. Many craftspeople are located out in the country, so you get a bonus look at the countryside as well. See “Nelson, Richmond & Motueka” in chapter 13.

- **Christchurch:** The Arts Centre Galleria is home to about 40 crafts stores selling a wide range of goods, from sheepskin products and leather to wood-turned bowls and ceramics. More turn up for the weekend Arts Centre Market. Also in Christchurch, check out High Street for an eclectic mix of antiques, secondhand stores, cafes, and new and old clothing boutiques; Cashel Mall for fashion and design stores; Victoria Street for a whole host of new
- **Hokitika and Greymouth:** Jade/greenstone/*pounamu* and gold are found in abundance in these two West Coast towns. Stores specializing in both are found side by side in both Hokitika and Greymouth. See “Greymouth & Lake Brunner” and “Hokitika: Greenstone, Glowworms & Gold” in chapter 15.
- **Queenstown:** This is the home of expensive shopping. You’ll find that most things have big price tags, but the quality is invariably tops. There are leading New Zealand and international clothing labels, sheepskin products, souvenirs, leather, original arts and crafts, and masses of jewelry. See “Queenstown” in chapter 16.

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## 16 THE BEST AFTER DARK FUN

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- **Dinner on High:** Dining in Auckland’s Sky Tower Observatory restaurant over 1,000 feet above New Zealand’s largest city gives new meaning to the phrase “getting high.” Take your pick from a terrific menu and enjoy your meal gazing out over the sparkling waters of Waitemata Harbour and the city below. Before or after dinner, make sure you take time to look through the high-powered binoculars on the Observation Deck. See “Exploring Auckland” in chapter 6.
- **Soaking Under the Stars:** What could be better than lying back in the hot, soothing mineral waters of Rotorua’s award-winning Japanese Buro pools at the Polynesian Spa, set among rocks and waterfalls beside the misty Lake Rotorua, looking up at the stars? The complex has 27 pools in total (some indoors), including 13 lovely private pools. This is the perfect place to ease sore muscles after a long day exploring. See “Rotorua” in chapter 9.
- **Seeing Stars:** This is your chance to see the wonders of the Southern Hemisphere sky in a whole new way. Fresh from a major refurbishment, the Carter Observatory features exciting exhibitions and multimedia presentations that take you on an amazing interplanetary adventure. If you thought our skies were bright and starry before you went in, you’ll come out with a fresh appreciation of their beauty. See “Exploring Wellington” in chapter 12.
- **Meeting the Creatures of the Night:** There’s always something going on at Wellington Zoo after dark, and this could be your chance to find out which animals wake up as everyone else goes to sleep. If you time it right, you could join one of the group sleepovers (minimum numbers required); or, if you don’t fancy bedding with the animals, check out the zoo’s summer evening program. They often have picnic evenings with live jazz or blues to add to

the entertainment. See “Exploring Wellington” in chapter 12.

- **Eating on the Move:** See the sights of Christchurch and enjoy dinner at the same time. Climb aboard the Tramway Restaurant in one of the city’s beautifully restored trams and savor a four course dinner while you complete five circuits of the tramway through central city. See “Meals on Wheels” in chapter 14.
- **Art After Dark:** Enjoy one of the largest permanent art collections in New Zealand when Christchurch Art Gallery opens its doors for its weekly late night on Wednesday evenings. There are 5,500 paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings for you to peruse, and an excellent restaurant for you to dine in before or after soaking up Canterbury culture. See “Exploring Christchurch” in chapter 14.
- **Bar Hopping:** If you’re a night owl looking for a good time, strut your stuff South of Lichfield—more commonly known as SOL—a new back-alley development that features over a dozen lively themed bars and restaurants. There are lights galore, lots of music, and heaps of people.

The best time to go is after dark on a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday when there are bigger crowds. Nearby Poplar Lane is a similar, smaller development with more funky bars. See “Christchurch After Dark” in chapter 14.

- **Now Showing:** At Wanaka’s Cinema Paradiso you’ll get a night at the movies like no other. Think old hall, castoff armchairs, big cushions and sofas, and even an old car to give you the drive-in feel. Factor in a 30-minute cafe-snack break and you’re guaranteed a unique night at the movies. See “The Big Screen” in chapter 16.
- **Over the Edge:** If you ran out of time to complete a bungee jump during the day, fear not, for there’s still time. At the Ledge, A. J. Hackett and his crew have created the ultimate nighttime jump. You can’t see how far you’re falling in the dark, so if you were too afraid to try it in daylight, maybe this is for you! You also get to enjoy a nighttime ride up to the Ledge on the gondola, so you’ll have great views of all the Queenstown lights twinkling in Lake Wakatipu. See “Queenstown” in chapter 16.