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The best beds in New Zealand

Beachside cottage, chic city pad or deluxe wilderness camp – we reveal the best places to sleep in New Zealand

Kate Pettifer Published: 30 November 2011

1. The romantic retreat: Matakauri Lodge, Queenstown, South Island

A secluded location, swoon-worthy views, flawless service and Michelin-level food and wine. There are so many reasons why this swish lodge commands such a superb reputation (and pricey nightly rate). Its 11 rooms, including eight outlying suites, have been decorated by interior designer Virginia Fisher – expect natural finishes, butterscotch walls, snow-white linens and unbeatable views of the Remarkables, Cecil and Walter Peak mountain ranges from the vast picture windows. Executive chef Dale Gartland (an expat Brit who trained with Michael Caines) creates a nightly five-course tasting menu, featuring exquisite seasonal dishes such as Southland venison tenderloin with baby veg in juniper berry sauce. Have staff book you a massage in the spa, or perhaps a helicopter tour of Milford Sound – nothing is too much trouble, with personal service that is thoughtful, but not fawning.

Get me there: Doubles from £690, half board, including pre-dinner drinks and minibar (00 64 3 441 1008, www.matakaurilodge.co.nz).

2. The foodie find: Otahuna Lodge, Canterbury, South Island

A country homestead in Queen Anne style, this Canterbury lodge was built in 1895; even its gardens – formal and edible – are 110 years old. There's plenty to keep you entertained on the 12-hectare estate, too, from foraging in the grounds to cookery lessons. You'll certainly want to try the latter once you've feasted on Jimmy McIntyre's five-course tasting menu. Guests dine communally on dishes such as heirloom beetroot soup with Meadowcroft goat's cheese toast – each course wine-matched with a New Zealand tippie. Afterwards, roll back to one of seven sumptuous suites, decorated with country checks and oatmeal carpets, stained-glass windows and whitewashed verandas.

Get me there: Doubles from £549, half board, including wine-matching and pre-dinner drinks (00 64 33 296333, www.otahuna.co.nz).

3. The bargain apartments: Kawarau Hotel by Hilton, Queenstown, South Island

With so much to do in adventure capital Queenstown, a self-catering apartment with restaurant options on your doorstep is the ideal set-up, and not something you'd expect from a titanic hotel chain – but don't be put off. The newly-opened Kawarau Hotel by Hilton enjoys one of the only north-facing (sunny) spots on Lake Wakatipu, and lies within easy reach of the town centre. Its 98 modern units, each with well-equipped kitchenettes, enjoy a little more character than traditional Hilton

rooms, with quirky, contemporary art, mismatched cushions and tongue-and-groove wall panels. Guests staying here can use the pool and gym at the neighbouring Hilton hotel, and there's a cinema on site, with slouchy leather armchairs for the twice-nightly screenings. And if you can't quite make the short walk into town after a day of adrenaline-pumping, Me & Mee Noodle Bar is right in the building for a quick supper.

Get me there: Doubles from £55, room only (00 643 450 1650, www.kawarauhotelbyhilton.com).

4. The quirky city sleep: Museum Art Hotel, Wellington, North Island

The hotel equivalent of Marmite, this is a property you'll either love or hate, with its flamboyant artwork and opulent look. (Owner Chris Parkin's eclectic collection of modern paintings and sculptures is exhibited about the property.) But you can't argue with its prime position opposite Wellington's Te Papa museum, or its starry track record – former guests have included Avatar and Hobbit cast and crew. There are 160 rooms in two sections: the original 1980s wing was moved lock, stock and barrel off the waterfront on rail tracks to make way for Te Papa; the newer wing comprises 100 apartments with kitchenettes, sleek dark furniture, leather headboards and velour chaises longues. Head to the hotel's Hippopotamus restaurant for French food in tiny, artfully-arranged portions, served in a frou-frou dining room dotted with brightly-upholstered Louis XV armchairs.

Get me there: Doubles from £98, B&B (00 64 4 802 8900, www.museumhotel.co.nz).

5. The family-friendly cheapie: Taupo Top 10, Taupo, North Island

Top 10s are classic New Zealand campsites (there are 50 locations across the country), loved for their kid-friendly facilities and their affordable prices. If you're hiring a motorhome, they're a great option to have on your radar; they also accept tents and caravans, and have a range of chalet-style units for those arriving without their own digs. Taupo Top 10 is just a five-minute drive from the town centre and the northeastern shore of the lake; nearby outdoor activities are countless, including jet rides up the river towards Huka Falls, horse rides through the woods near the 'Craters of the Moon' geothermal site, bungee-jumping over the Waikato river and trout-fishing on Lake Taupo itself. Back at the campsite, choose from 39 accommodation units, from bedroom-only cabins to two-bedroom motel rooms. A clean but basic Studio Park Motel sleeps two adults and up to two children, with an ensuite shower, plus a small kitchenette and a deck.

Get me there: Studio park motels from £73, room only (00 64 7 378 6860, www.taupotop10.co.nz).

6. The hip design hotel: Hotel DeBrett, Auckland, North Island

Just off Queen Street, Auckland's equivalent of London's Oxford Street, lies this 25-room hideaway. It's been a hotel since 1841 but owners John Courtney and Michelle Deery revamped and reopened it in 2009. There's a delectable mid-century feel to much of the decor, with '50s-style lacquered headboards that curve into bedside tables, and Ercol-inspired furniture. Best of all are the Loft Suites, with duplex layouts linked by a spiral staircase. The Art Deco-style Housebar features duck-egg paintwork and cream leather banquettes, while the original courtyard has been roofed over to create an airy restaurant space with exposed brickwork. Owner Michelle is behind much of the hotel's look – she even designed the Paul Smith-esque striped carpets.

Get me there: Doubles from £151, B&B, including hosted pre-dinner drinks (00 64 9 925 9000, www.hoteldebrett.com).

7. The beach bach: Grey Stone, Franklin District, North Island

Nothing to do with composer Johann Sebastian, the bach (rhymes with 'match') is a New Zealand institution. Traditionally family holiday homes – and these days, also rental properties – baches are simple shacks near the beach. This one is a considerable upgrade in terms of home comforts, with three ensuite bedrooms, polished wood floors, voile-draped beds and claw-foot bath – and ocean views looking out onto the Firth of Thames and the Coromandel peninsula beyond. You're only a five-minute walk from the Waharau Regional Park for bush walks, and an hour from Auckland. The town

of Thames, at the base of the peninsula, is a half-hour drive away, making day trips to the Coromandel's beaches a cinch.

Get me there: From £126 for two, room only; bedlinen, £15pp, and £20 for every extra person (www.bookabach.co.nz/3159).

8. The cosy farm cottage: Off the Mapp, Marlborough, South Island

This 100-year-old cob cottage (cob is an age-old building material of clay mixed with tussock) is an idyllic out-in-the-wilds option at the top of the Waihopai valley. Perched above the river, it comes with an outdoor shower, plus twin cast-iron baths (enjoy a starlit bath à deux). The cottage itself is a cosy den, divided into sleeping and living quarters with an open fire; lanterns and chunky wooden furniture add to the prairie-cabin feel. Off the Mapp is a working farm and more – ask conservation expert Roland Mapp to take you on a tour of the valley, or if you're at home on a horse, his wife Jenny will lead you out on a hack.

Get me there: Doubles from £126, B&B (00 64 3 572 4222, www.offthemapp.co.nz).

9. The super-luxe wilderness camp: Minaret Station, Wanaka, South Island

This new, luxury tented camp is so remote that reaching it requires a dramatic helicopter ride (transfers are included in the room rate). Minaret Station sits in an elevated glacial valley in the Southern Alps, beneath a snow-dusted peak, with grassy pastures and a meandering river lining the valley floor. The station's four canvas-roofed 'tents' are more like cabins, each with a private deck and open-air hot tub, along with mod-cons: hot showers, wall-to-wall cream carpet and plump king-size beds. The camp's beating heart is the Mountain Kitchen – it's not just for dining; here you'll find the living area and library. But the real draw is the pristine wilderness: try fly-fishing, take a guided valley hike or just inhale the splendid isolation.

Get me there: Doubles from £1,758 per night, all-inclusive with helicopter transfers; two-night minimum stay (00 64 2 7588 9865, www.minaretstation.com).

10. The boutique B&B: 23 Hepburn, Auckland, North Island

Clapboard villas with fretwork-framed verandas are among New Zealand's oldest forms of architecture. Book into this three-bedroom B&B in the pretty Auckland suburb of Ponsonby (a hub of indie boutiques and cafes) and you can stay in one. Rooms here exude a genteel elegance, with off-white walls, floral woollen rugs, polished wooden floors and brass bedside lamps. The attention to detail is commendable, whether it's the thoughtful range of refreshments stocked in the bedroom pantry (fresh orange juice, milk in a jug), or the knowledge-stuffed folder of helpful local information (restaurant recommendations, local history). Continental breakfast is delivered to your room daily – or you can devour pastries around the kitchen table of charming host Beth McKay (in your dressing gown, if you like).

Get me there: Doubles from £98, B&B (00 64 9 376 0622, www.23hepburn.co.nz).

11. The winery stay The Black Barn, Hawke's Bay, North Island

This two-double-bedroom retreat on the namesake vineyard in Hawke's Bay is a relatively-modern build, incorporating reclaimed timbers and recycled corrugated iron-roof panels, yet has an old-fashioned, hunting-lodge feel. Perhaps it's because of the sumptuous, throwback-Colonial furnishings, including an antler chandelier, well-pummelled sofas that invite reclining, elegant dark-wood tallboys and period dressers. The kitchen is worthy of a TV chef's studio, or you can have a go at cooking alfresco using the gas barbecue on the deck. The winery's bistro is open for lunch, serving moreish dishes such as shortloin of lamb with smoked beetroot and spinach gnocchi, made all the more delicious by the fact that you can pad back to your room for a wine-induced siesta.

Get me there: Entire property from £328, including breakfast provisions for your first day (00 64 6 877 7985, www.blackbarn.co.nz).