

# New Zealand

Known as the “land of the long white cloud” by the indigenous Maoris, this diverse island country has something for every type of traveler. **BY BARBARA RIES AND STEPHANIE MARTIN**





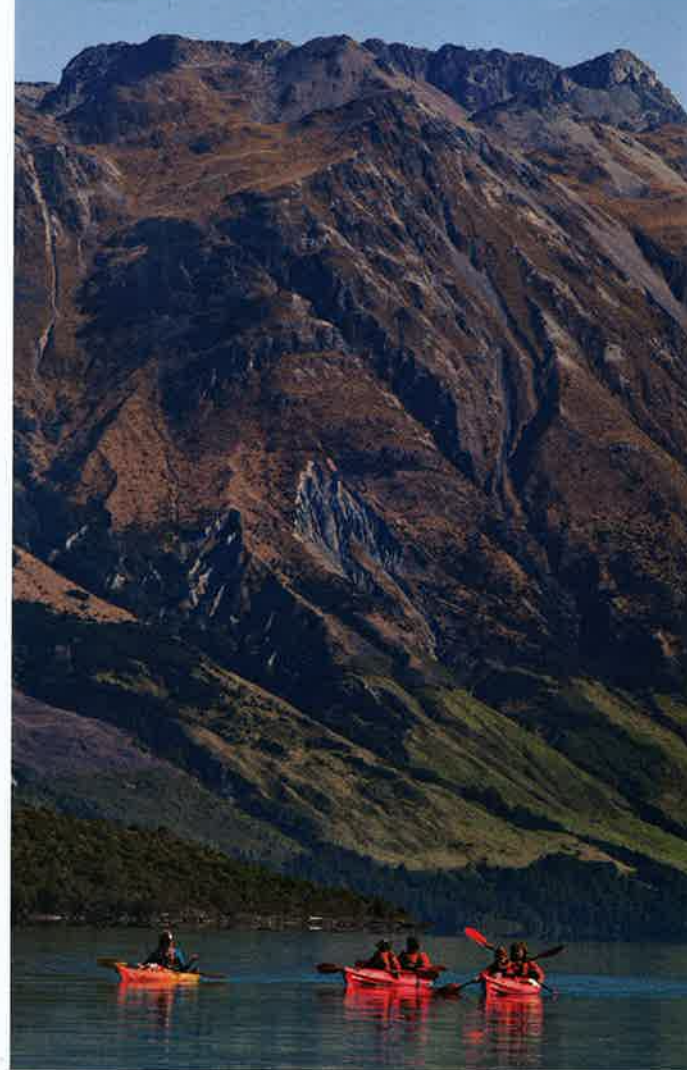
**K**IWI FEVER TOOK the Bay Area by storm this past summer when Team New Zealand nearly wrested the America's Cup away from U.S. waters. The team's stunning charge at the trophy accompanied by its humble, team-first approach off the water quickly cultivated a fervor following throughout the Bay Area. But it wasn't just the team that sailed into local hearts. Looking to expand opportunities for Kiwi businesses and attract a new wave of tourism, the country's trade and enterprise office traveled the Bay Area to showcase the bounty of this two-island nation. Here are four places on each island you won't want to miss if you visit New Zealand.

## THE SOUTH ISLAND

The latest big visitor blitz was a flurry of "Tolkien tourism" sparked by the South Island's starring role in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. The similarities between South Island and J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth are unmistakable: waterfalls, burbling brooks, snow-capped peaks and lush forest valleys. A sign welcoming visitors to Glenorchy in Otago, a quiet, picture-perfect hamlet at the mirrored edge of Lake Wakatipu, reads "The Gateway to Paradise." For Tolkien fans, this says it all.

1 Among the biggest draws on the island is **Mount Aspiring National Park** and its trailheads leading to several prominent treks, or "tramps," as the Kiwis say. The Routeburn Track, rated one of the world's top 10 classic hikes, winds 20 miles over the alps to the Te Anau side and the Milford Sound waterfalls. It has conservation huts (maintained by the provincial district) for backpackers and well-marked trails accessible to day hikers.

2 Considered the Aspen of New Zealand, the **Queenstown resort area** caters to skiers, kayakers, skydivers, bungee jumpers, jet boaters and those just seeking leisurely



cruises through the waterfalls of Milford Sound and Fiordland National Park. In high season (January and February) Queenstown becomes party central — downtown streets are lined with bars and restaurants — as well as a base for tours to fit any budget, from simple back-packer to luxury explorer.

3 Southwest of the capital city of Christchurch is a formal country estate in Tai Tapu where King George IV was once a guest. Now **Otahuna Lodge**, this grand Victorian survived incarnations as a Catholic seminary, a commune home and a bed-and-breakfast and now includes seven luxury suites, lovingly restored by Americans Miles Renfro and Hall Canon in 2007. A varied five-course degustation menu served each evening features estate-raised lamb, beef, poultry and pork, and garden delicacies, paired with selections from the South Island's exceptional winemaking regions.

4 **Double Hill** is a centuries-old sheep and cattle farm open throughout the year. Shearing for merino wool happens in both summer and winter. Visitors are welcome to experience not only sheep-shearing but helicopter tours of nearby mountain glaciers; the largest, Tasman Glacier, offers views of the country's highest peak, Aoraki/Mount Cook. »

Opener: Lake Wakatipu reflects the sunlit tips of the Humboldt Mountain range. This page: Kayakers at the northern end of Lake Wakatipu; the historic Otahuna Lodge. Opposite page: Hikers on the Routeburn track; food from chef Jimmy McIntyre at Otahuna Lodge; sheep at Double Hill Station.







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This page, top to bottom: Auckland's Viaduct Harbour; Waiheke Island Winery; Opposite page: Rangitoto Island volcanic outcrop trail.





## THE NORTH ISLAND

While many travelers use it as a stopover on the way to the South Island, the North Island is resplendent in its own way. Divided by mountain ranges that run through its middle, it features flowing farmlands on either side, as well as the Volcanic Plateau, an active volcanic and thermal area. It's also the home of bustling Auckland, inhabited by one-third of the country's 4.5 million population and ranked one of the three most livable cities in the world. You could easily spend weeks exploring all North Island has to offer, but if you are short on time, here are some best bets.

1 New Zealanders consider the **Viaduct Basin of Auckland** the spiritual home of the America's Cup. Once suffering from urban decay and neglect, the Viaduct Harbor area got a shot in the arm when the Kiwis brought the Cup home to Auckland in 1995. The result was a completely redeveloped commercial waterfront surrounded by hotels, condominiums and upscale restaurants that was buoyed by the influx of not only international sailing teams but also the growth of the area's maritime industry. The Viaduct's newest addition is the Wynyard Quarter, which features more than a mile of coastal footage with an emphasis on open spaces for the public.

2 Well worth a stop in the Wynyard Quarter is the **Auckland Fish Market**, where you will rub arms with fishermen straight off the boat and restaurateurs getting their daily catch. You can taste what's fresh in the open-air market and on the sunny patio; while there are many restaurant options, Market Sushi, the cart tucked inside the foyer, has delicious and inexpensive fare.

3 Looking for a great hike? The **Rangitoto Island** volcanic outcrop, the youngest of the islands surrounding New Zealand at only 700 years old, is a 25-minute ferry ride from Auckland. The favorite hike, to the top of Rangitoto, is an hour-long trek through fire roads and single-track trails that ends with sweeping views of the island, the Hauraki Gulf and Auckland. Be sure to walk the Crater Rim Track and then the Lava Caves, just 15 minutes from the summit, where you can explore tunnels cut by centuries-old lava. Maintained by a trust, the island's wilderness has no facilities other than restrooms at the ferry dock, so be sure to enough bring water and food for a half-day trip.

4 Though just a 40-minute ferry ride from Auckland, **Waiheke Island** feels worlds away — home to a vibrant arts and wine community and a slower, more sumptuous way of life. Rent a bike at Auckland's Ferry Building or just beyond the Waiheke parking lot and pedal off to

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one of the island's 17 vineyards for lunch; the Mudbrick Vineyard has expansive views of Hauraki Gulf. Local olive oil, produced right on the island by the award-winning Rangihoua Estate, is a treat you won't want to miss. While away the rest of the your day on one of the many beaches; Onetangi is a one-mile stretch of white sand and beautiful water where you can windsurf, stand-up paddleboard or just sit. If you visit near the end of January, check out Sculpture on the Gulf, an exhibit of contemporary outdoor sculpture that dots the breathtaking Waiheke coastline over a 2.5-kilometer walk. **M**