

South Island grandeur: Coronet Peak (left) and The Remarkables (right), two of New Zealand's premier ski destinations, with Queenstown (lower right)

# NEW ZEALAND 101

TRAVELERS OFTEN THINK OF NEW ZEALAND AS JUST BEAUTIFUL VISTAS (REMEMBER *LORD OF THE RINGS*?). WHILE IT DOES BOAST STUNNING LANDSCAPES, YOU'LL ALSO FIND A FANTASTIC WINE SCENE, UNBELIEVABLE LODGES, AND HAPPENING CITIES.  
**BY ARABELLA BOWEN**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS BY PATRICK REYNOLDS AND RICHARD BRIMER**





**Even if you're not a hiker**, a New Zealand trip will convert you to the great outdoors. And great they are. Comprised of two main islands, together the size of California, the Kiwi nation is positively littered with gorgeous alpine passes, grassy plains, and glacier-fed rivers. At 4,385 miles southwest of Honolulu and 994 miles southeast of Australia, it's worth the trek for the jaw-dropping geography alone, but our guide opens up a world beyond the bungee-jumping mainstays to take in the best of this young, energized country known for its friendly people. From Auckland, a cosmopolitan hub with a burgeoning fashion scene, we explore the wine trail, which has gorgeous locations on both North and South Islands and includes the country's capital, Wellington, before ending in the snowcapped Southern Lakes region. Along the way, New Zealand's full panorama emerges: a passion for wine and food distinguished by low-key vineyards and farm-fresh cuisine; an eco- and design-friendly approach to lodging influenced by native Maori culture; and towns rife with quirky charms.

## AUCKLAND

**Most international flights arrive in Auckland. Wise travelers lay over here a night or two to recover from jet lag and experience the country's largest city.**

Photographs by Patrick Reynolds

**Founded by the British in 1840 on what** was once native Maori land, Auckland today is a remarkably cosmopolitan South Pacific city where the unusual combination of Maori and British influences is underpinned by a yachting lifestyle—thanks to its superlative waterfront setting. The best introduction to the city is via Fullers Ferry, which traverses the Hauraki Gulf to colonial **Devonport**, a charming Victorian neighborhood with skyline views that comprise

Auckland's iconic Sky Tower, the Southern Hemisphere's answer to Seattle's Space Needle. The view from Devonport also takes in the 48 softly undulating (but long dead) volcanoes on which the city sprawls. Many of these were once important Maori *pās*—fortified tribal villages—though mere vestiges remain at historic sites like One Tree Hill, where another commanding city view awaits. Today, concrete examples of New Zealand's Maori culture are mostly relegated to museums—an unmissable collection at the **Auckland War Memorial Museum** counts an intact Maori meetinghouse and menacing war canoe among its highlights. To learn more about Auckland's contemporary Maori culture, book a **Potiki Adventures** tour that includes a visit to the workshop of master carver Blaine Te Rito—it may be the highlight of your visit. While quays jut out from much of downtown, Auckland's waterfront really coalesces around glitzy **Viaduct Harbour** north of the Fullers Ferry

landing, built in the late-1990s to host the city's first America's Cup race. Gawking at expensive boats from harborside restaurants is the main attraction here, and you'll gain a deep appreciation for Auckland's nickname, City of Sails, by doing just that over lamb cutlets at chic **Euro Restaurant and Bar** or a plate of South Island salmon at an outdoor table at lively **Soul**. Farther inland, Ponsonby Road is a popular local hangout lined with some of the city's most happening restaurants and bars. The contemporary Italian **SPQR** has a great terrace from which to watch the scene, while nearby **Rocco** serves up Spanish-influenced dishes in a sophisticated corner house. With the exception of **Food Alley**—a collection of no-frills pan-Asian food stalls much-beloved by locals—you'll have no reason to go downtown after dark, but the warren of streets around High Street comes to life by day with some of the city's best shopping. Most of Auckland's hotels with downtown locations and modern conveniences cater to business travelers. The best of these is the great-value **Heritage Auckland Hotel**, which has spacious suites that lie within easy reach of waterfront restaurants (request a room in the newer Tower section). A more stylish stay awaits at the three-suite **Boatshed**, offshore on Waiheke Island, where rooms occupy individual boathouses and a three-story lighthouse (ferry transfer included). Decadent **Mollies**, a 13-suite boutique hotel near Ponsonby Road, is the finest in-town choice, with bold Philippe Starck designs, Christie's-worthy artwork, and in-room fireplaces.

**BELOW: Auckland War Memorial Museum. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The trendy Viaduct Harbour neighborhood; Euro Restaurant and Bar; Cytoplasm, a Viaduct Harbour sculpture; an Auckland creation, vodka cocktail with sliced-beet garnish**



**SHOPPING IN Auckland**  
It is expensive to send production overseas from New Zealand. The result? An abundance of first-rate local fashions created with homegrown materials.

**Karen Walker** A designer who produces wonderfully structured, Victorian-influenced prêt-à-porter with a touch of whimsy and grunge, Walker also has a great line of accessories and eyewear. 15 O'Connell St.; 64/9-309-6299, karenwalker.com

**Kate Sylvester** A rising Kiwi star, Sylvester favors minimalist, sensual clothes with an edge for women and men. 47 High St.; 64/9-307-3282, katesylvester.com

**Native Agent** This Maori-run shop stocks handmade blankets, pillows, and clothing with designs that incorporate native trading symbols, such as muskets and feathers. 507 New North Rd.; 64/9-845-3289, nativeagent.co.nz

**Royal Jewellery Studio** You'll find jewelry made entirely by local New Zealand artists; the jade pieces by Te Kaha are particularly exceptional. 486 New North Rd.; 64/9-846-0200, royaljewellerystudio.com

**World** A fashion-forward duo runs this chain of high-concept lifestyle stores for men and women, plus wonderfully atmospheric World Beauty shops that evoke old-world apothecaries. 57 High St.; 64/9-373-3034, worldbrand.co.nz

**Zambesi** Elizabeth Findlay designs moody and richly textured clothing for both men and women—all sold under the Zambesi label. Vulcan Lane and O'Connell Street; 64/9-303-1701, zambesi.co.nz







**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:** The Tuki Tuki River and Hawke's Bay wine country; Peppers Martinborough Hotel, built 1882, in a small wine village; a local restaurant's take on seared tuna; artisanal cheese making at the Te Mata Cheese factory, in Havelock North



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:** Jumping from a waterfall at Maraetotara Stream; the clapboard Martinborough First Church, built in 1891; Ocean Beach, considered primo surfing territory



the quality of the vineyards, and luxury options are limited (even the most expensive lodging, The County Hotel, is quite dated). Oenophiles should instead splurge on a contemporary cottage stay among the vines at **Craggy Range**, or try the great-value **Crown Hotel**, in Napier's up-and-coming Ahuriri neighborhood.

The diminutive town of Martinborough, a 3-hour drive south of Hawke's Bay, was settled in the 19th century and has a clutch of streets named for places—New York and Panama, for example—that the founder is said to have visited. The town plays second fiddle, however, to the dozens of nearby pinot noir vineyards, which date from as recently as 1980. Pioneering wineries such as **Ata Rangi**, **Palliser Estate**, **Te Kairanga**, and a few others are all conveniently located within walking or biking distance of

## THE WINE TRAIL

The classic New Zealand wine trail, a 240-mile route, starts on North Island at Hawke's Bay and ends in Marlborough, at the northern tip of South Island.

Photographs by Richard Brimer



There is much to sample on the wine route—from bold cabernets, complex pinot noirs, and crisp sauvignon blancs, to farm-fresh lamb, cheese, venison, and fish at haute-barnyard restaurants in the midst of local vineyards. The only catch: Seeing it all requires lots of driving (on the left-hand side!) along winding one-lane roads. Plan on seven days to cover the highlights—and to enjoy at least one lingering afternoon lunch on a vineyard terrace—or 10 days to really bask in the splendid leafy surroundings you'll

encounter at each place. To make it happen, take a 1-hour flight from Auckland to Napier (in Hawke's Bay), pick up a rental car at the airport, drop it off at the ferry terminal in Wellington, and arrange for another car at the Picton ferry landing in the Marlborough region (check with your rental company—most do not allow their cars on the boat).

The first stop on the trail, **Hawke's Bay**, is the most picturesque of New Zealand's wine districts, as dozens of vineyards fan out around Napier, a remarkable town with intact Art Deco architecture that rivals that of South Beach and is worth a visit of its own accord. Home to the country's oldest vineyard, **Mission Estate** (founded by Catholic missionaries in 1851), the region has a welcoming climate that prompted winemakers to put down the roots that now produce New Zealand's best cabernets, chardonnays, and, more recently, syrahs. Three outstanding local vineyards—the austere **Craggy Range**, familial **Sileni Estates**, and traditional **Te Mata**—showcase the region's diversity; the first two also have great on-site restaurants. The hotels here have yet to match

## JUMPING OFF IN Wellington

The ferry to Picton—and the beginning of the Marlborough wine region—leaves from the outskirts of Wellington, New Zealand's seat of parliamentary government. Those short on time often skip visiting it, but overnighting in the world's southernmost capital makes for a fun, urban counterpoint to the wine trail. The setting bears an uncanny similarity to San Francisco, considering its steep hillsides dotted with wooden homes perched over a picturesque harbor. In fact, prime

examples of Victorian houses that are dead ringers for San Francisco's colorful Painted Ladies can be found along Wellington's smashing waterfront promenade, Oriental Parade, which extends past the glitzy **Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand**. Their rooftops are visible from the delightful **Wellington Cable Car**, which ascends the slopes behind Lampton Quay. Bed down near the water at the new **Ohtel Hotel**, a smart, intimate 10-room boutique hotel,

Oriental Bay, Wellington's "Riviera"



with fashionable studios overlooking Oriental Parade, or the elegant **Museum Hotel** nearby, which has 165 rooms in masculine, muted tones—all come with oversize baths, some

with museum-facing balconies. Save room for the city's first-rate food scene, localized on pedestrian-only Cuba Street: The trendy **Matterhorn**, a local institution with a buzzing

bar and dining room, and the formal **Logan Brown Restaurant and Bar**, with its accent on contemporary New Zealand cuisine, are two of our favorites.





## THE WINE TRAIL CONTINUED

the main square, and the excellent Martinborough Wine Center, in the heart of town, offers a comprehensive area overview and wine tastings. The hotel of choice, the historic 16-room **Peppers Martinborough Hotel**, has lorded over the town square since 1882 and boasts the lovely Martinborough Restaurant on the ground level. Next door, casual **Wendy Campbell's The French Bistro** pairs fine French fare like duck confit with local wines.

New Zealand's leading winemaking region, Marlborough lies at the northern tip of South Island, below the scenic Queen Charlotte Sound and some 5 hours by car and ferry south of Martinborough. The country's viticultural reputation is staked on the area's sauvignon blancs—but the 65 wineries here also produce terrific sparkling, pinot noir, and Riesling varieties. Two of the best vintners, **Allan Scott Wines** and **Cloudy Bay**, lie across from each other on Jacksons Road; the former also hosts a superb new micro-brewery, **Moa Beer**, run by Scott's 27-year-old son. Another notable vineyard, **Grove Mill**, made its name in organic wine production, and its “vine library”—showcasing every grape variety—is an excellent primer. You can sleep among the vines in a one-bedroom suite at the newly opened **Marlborough Vintners Hotel** or check in to the smart **Hotel d'Urville**, in Blenheim, for an in-town stay. If you're traveling with friends or family, the three-bedroom penthouse at **The Yacht Club Hotel**, near the ferry landing in Picton, is one of the best deals around. As with Hawke's Bay, vineyard restaurants make the best dining choices—head to Allan Scott's **Twelve Trees Restaurant** for a lingering lunch and to **Herzog Winery** for a sophisticated tasting menu at dinnertime.

**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: A sheep meadow outside Martinborough; superb reds, whites, and rosés for sale in the Ata Rangi winery's tasting room; the Old Church, built in 1863, now a chic restaurant and bar**

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

**Sherman's Picks:**  
 ★ = Smart Splurge  
 ▼ = Great Value

### AUCKLAND

**WHAT TO DO**  
**Devonport** devonport.co.nz

**Auckland War Memorial Museum** The Auckland Domain; 64/9-309-0443, aucklandmuseum.com

**Urban Maori Experience** Potiki Adventures; 64/9-845-5932, potikiadventures.com

**Viaduct Harbour** viaduct.co.nz

### WHERE TO STAY

★ **Mollies** 6 Tweed St.; junior suite from \$331/night; 64/9-376-3489, mollies.co.nz

✓ **Heritage Hotel** 35 Hobson St.; deluxe suite from \$180/night; 64/9-302-1277, heritagehotels.co.nz

**The Boatshed** Waiheke Island; from \$235/night; 64/9-372-3242, boatshed.co.nz

**Hilton Auckland** 147 Quay St., Princes Wharf; from \$170/night; 64/9-978-2000, hilton.com

### WHERE TO EAT

★ **Euro Restaurant and Bar** Shed 22, Princes Wharf; entrées from \$23; 64/9-309-9866, eurobar.co.nz

✓ **Rocco Restaurant** 23 Ponsonby Rd.; entrées from \$17; rocco.co.nz

**Soul Bar and Bistro** Viaduct Harbour; entrées from \$22; 64/9-356-7249, soulbar.co.nz

**SPQR** 150 Ponsonby Rd.; entrées from \$20; 64/9-360-1710, spqrnz.co.nz

**Food Alley** 9-11 Albert St.; entrées from \$5; 64/09-373-4917

### THE WINE TRAIL

#### WHAT TO DO

**Hawke's Bay Wine Tour** Odyssey New Zealand, Hawke's Bay; 64/2-1 63-9839, odysseynz.com

**Art Deco Walking Tour** The Art Deco Shop; 163 Tennyson St., Napier, Hawke's Bay; 64/6-835-0022, artdeconapier.com

**Craggy Range** 253 Waimarama Rd., Havelock North, Hawke's Bay; 64/6-873-7126, craggyrange.com

**Sileni Estates** 2016 Maraekakaho Rd., Hastings, Hawke's Bay; 64/6-879-8768, sileni.co.nz

**Te Mata Estate** 349 Te Mata Rd., Havelock North, Hawke's Bay; 64/6-877-4399, temata.co.nz

**Ata Rangi** Puruatanga Road, Martinborough; 64/6-306-9570, atarangi.co.nz

**Te Kairanga** Martin's Road, Martinborough; 64/6-306-9122, tekairanga.co.nz

**Palliser Estate** Kitchener Street, Martinborough; 64/6-306-9019, palliser.co.nz

**Allan Scott Winery and Moa Beer** Jacksons Road, Blenheim, Marlborough; 64/3-572-9054, allanscott.com, moabeer.co.nz

**Cloudy Bay Wines** Jacksons Road, Blenheim, Marlborough; 64/3-520-9140, cloudybay.co.nz

**Marlborough Wine Tours** Sounds Connection, Marlborough; 64/3-573-8843, soundsconnection.co.nz

**Queen Charlotte Sound Cruise 'n' Walk** Cougar Line, Marlborough; cougarline.co.nz

#### WHERE TO STAY

★ **Craggy Range** 253 Waimarama Rd., Havelock North, Hawke's Bay; one-bedroom cottage from \$234/night; 64/6-873-7126, craggyrange.com

★ **Peppers Martinborough Hotel** The Square, Martinborough; rooms from \$195/night; 64/6-306-9350, martinboroughhotel.co.nz

✓ **The Crown Hotel** Corner of Bridge Street and Harding Road, Napier, Hawke's Bay; studios from \$134/night; 64/6-833-8300, thecrownnapier.co.nz

✓ **The Yacht Club Hotel** 25 Waikawa Rd., Picton; penthouse suite from \$195/night; 64/3-573-7002, theyachtclub.co.nz

✓ **Marlborough Vintners Hotel** 190 Rapaura Rd., Blenheim; one-bedroom suites from \$136/night; 64/3-572-5094, mvh.co.nz

**Hotel d'Urville** 52 Queen St., Blenheim; from \$188/night; 64/3-577-9945, durville.com

#### WHERE TO EAT

★ **Herzog Restaurant** Herzog Winery, 81 Jeffries Rd., Blenheim, Marlborough; tasting menu from \$77; 64/3-572-8770, herzog.co.nz

★ **Terroir** Craggy Range, 253 Waimarama Rd., Havelock North, Hawke's Bay; entrées from \$17; 64/6-873-7126, craggyrange.com

✓ **Twelve Trees Restaurant** Allan Scott Winery, Jackson's Road, Blenheim, Marlborough; entrées from \$12; 64/3-572-7123, allanscott.com

✓ **The Old Church** 199 Meeanee Rd., Napier, Hawke's Bay; entrées from \$16; 64/6-844-8866, theoldchurch.co.nz

**Mission Estate** 198 Church Rd., Greenmeadows, Hawke's Bay; entrées from \$17; 64/6-845-9354, missionestate.co.nz

**Pacifica** 209 Marine Parade, Napier, Hawke's Bay; entrées from \$25; 64/6-833-6335, pacifica.com

**Sileni Estates** 2016 Maraekakaho Rd., Hastings, Hawke's Bay; entrées from \$19; 64/6-879-4831, sileni.co.nz

**The Chartroom Restaurant** The Yacht Club Hotel, 25 Waikawa Rd., Picton, Marlborough; 64/3-573-7002, theyachtclub.co.nz

### WELLINGTON

#### WHAT TO DO

**Wellington Waterfront** wellingtonwaterfront.co.nz

**Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand** 55 Cable St.; 64/4-381-7000, tepapa.govt.nz

**Wellington Cable Car** Cable Car Lane, 280 Lambton Quay; wellingtonnz.com/cablecar

#### WHERE TO STAY

★ **Ohtel Hotel** 66 Oriental Parade; studios from \$337/night; 64/4-803-0600, ohtel.com

✓ **Museum Hotel** 90 Cable St.; from \$115/night; 64/4-802-8900, museumhotel.co.nz

#### WHERE TO EAT

★ **Logan Brown Restaurant and Bar** 192 Cuba St.; entrées from \$25; 64/4-801-5114, loganbrown.co.nz

✓ **The Matterhorn** 106 Cuba St.; 64/4-384-3359, matterhorn.co.nz

**Floriditas Café and Restaurant** 161 Cuba St.; 64/4-381-2212, floriditas.co.nz

## THE SOUTHERN LAKES REGION

#### WHAT TO DO

**Arrowtown** arrowtown.org.nz

**Central Otago Wine Tours Appellation Central** 64/3-442-0246, appellationcentral.co.nz

**Kawarau Bridge Bungy** A.J. Hackett Bungy; 64/3-442-4007, bungy.co.nz

**Dart River Jet Safaris** 64/3-442-9992, dartriverjet.co.nz

**Ride of the Rings** Dart Stables, Coll Street, Glenorchy; 64/3-442-5688, dartstables.com

**Routburn Track** 64/3-441-8170, infotrack.co.nz

**Onsen Hot Pools** Main Road, Arthurs Point; 64/3-442-5707, onsen.co.nz

**Dorothy Browns Cinema and Bar** Buckingham Street, Arrowtown; 64/3-442-1964, dorothybrowns.com (reservations recommended)

**NZONE** 64/3-442-2256, nzone.biz

**Sunrise Balloons** 64/3-442-0781, ballooningnz.com

#### WHERE TO STAY

★ **The Spire** Church Lane, Queenstown; from \$562/night, with airport transfers and breakfast; 64/3-441-0003, thespirehotels.com

✓ **Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel** 21 Robins Rd., Queenstown; from \$245/night, with breakfast; 64/3-441-0004, queenstownpark.co.nz

✓ **Nugget Point Boutique Hotel** 146 Arthurs Point Rd., Arthurs Point, Queenstown; suites from \$285/night; 64/3-441-0288, nuggetpoint.co.nz

## 5 Smart Splurges

**Buy Maori** Pick up a distinctive quilt, blanket, or pillowcase embroidered with Maori trading motifs at **Native Agent** (from \$127; nativeagent.co.nz), then splurge on a one-of-a-kind *pounamu* (jade) necklace by native artist **Te Kaha** at the nearby **Royal Jewellery Studio** (from \$245; royaljewellerystudio.co.nz).

**Take a Wine Tour** Get insider access to local vineyards—and avoid drinking and driving—on a full-day winery tour run by a passionate local expert. We recommend **Odyssey New Zealand** in Hawke's Bay (from \$130/person; odysseynz.com), **Marlborough Wine Tours** in Marlborough (from \$75/person; marlboroughwinetours.co.nz), and **Appellation Central** in Central Otago (from \$185/person; appellationcentral.co.nz).

**Milford Sound Fly-Cruise-Fly** See Milford Sound on Air Milford's 4-hour combo package, which includes a jaw-dropping flight over South Island's dramatic landscapes, plus a cruise through a majestic fjord (\$278/person, Queenstown pick-up included; airmilford.co.nz).

**Ship Wine Home** Many of New Zealand's best wines aren't exported to the United States; ship home your favorites from **Wine Tastes**, a Queenstown boutique with the country's most extensive wine selection (shipping from \$135 for eight bottles, \$192 for 15; winetastes.co.nz).

**Top Tables** New Zealand cuisine marries Pacific and European influences with first-rate local ingredients—outstanding examples are served at **Terroir** (entrées from \$17; craggyrange.com), **The Bunker** (from \$24; thebunker.co.nz), and **Saffron** (from \$24; saffronrestaurant.co.nz).



Craggy Range vineyard and winery, in the Hawke's Bay region of North Island



# MAKING IT HAPPEN

**Blanket Bay** Glenorchy; suites from \$879/night, with two meals; 64/3-441-0115, blanketbay.com

## WHERE TO EAT

★ **Wai Waterfront Restaurant** Steamer Wharf, Queenstown; entrées from \$24; 64/3-442-5969, wai.net.nz

★ **The Bunker** Cow Lane, Queenstown; entrées from \$23; 64/3-441-8030, thebunker.co.nz

★ **Saffron** Buckingham Street, Arrowtown;

entrées from \$24; 64/3-442-0131, saffronrestaurant.co.nz

✓ **Cow Restaurant** Cow Lane, Queenstown; entrées from \$8; 64/3-442-8588

✓ **Pier 19** Steamer Wharf, Queenstown; entrées from \$19; 64/3-442-4006, 19th.co.nz

✓ **Joe's Garage** Searle Lane, Queenstown; entrées from \$7, closed for dinner; 64/3-442-5282

✓ **Pesto** Buckingham Street, Arrowtown; entrées from \$11; 64/3-442-0885, pesto.co.nz

## COST CALENDAR

■ High ■ Low

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

The seasons are reversed in New Zealand—so summer, from December to February, brings steep peak-season prices. You'll get better value, pleasant temperatures, and fewer crowds between October and November (spring) or March and April (fall). Low-season prices are in effect at the height of winter (July and August) everywhere but Queenstown, which draws tourists for ski season.

**Blue Door** Buckingham Street, Arrowtown; 64/3-442-0885, saffronrestaurant.co.nz/bluedoor.htm

**Fergburger** 42 Shotover St., Queenstown; entrées from \$7; 64/3-441-1232, fergburger.com

## WHERE TO SHOP

**Patagonia Chocolates** 50 Beach St., Queenstown; 64/3-442-9066  
40 Buckingham St., Arrowtown; 64/3-409-8584, patagoniachocolates.co.nz

**Wine Tastes** 14 Beach St., Queenstown; 64/3-409-2226, winetastes.co.nz

**Angel Divine** 3 Church St., Queenstown; 64/3-442-8988

## GETTING THERE AND AROUND

The only nonstop flights to Auckland from the continental U.S. depart from LA on Air New Zealand

and Qantas Airways. The flight clocks in at 12 hours. You'll need almost a day to get there from the eastern U.S. At press time, February fares from LAX cost more than \$3,000 on Air New Zealand, but frequent Web sales can cut the price in half—as long as you're flexible with your dates. Driving is on the left-hand side, but you'll find most roads deserted—except near major cities like Wellington and Auckland. Large chains, including Budget and Avis, rent vehicles at all airports and at Wellington's ferry dock. It is wise to reserve ahead.

## ITINERARIES

You really need a month to do New Zealand properly, but with some compromises and targeted planning, you can make do with less time. If you only have one week,

limit yourself to Queenstown, where the combination of scenery, vineyards, and outdoor pursuits provide the best overall New Zealand experience. With two weeks, you can do everything covered in this story—Auckland, the wine trail, Wellington, Queenstown, and a fly-and-cruise to Milford Sound—albeit at a harried clip with driving, ferry rides, and some internal flights thrown in. With three weeks, you can opt to spend longer in each place or tack on side trips to South Island's impressive Fox and Franz Josef glaciers and North Island's warm geothermal mineral pools, in spiritual Rotorua. With a month, you can do all of this—and explore the northern reaches of North Island, where the Bay of Plenty's windswept beaches and enduring Maori traditions beckon.



For more information, visit our **New Zealand Travel Guide** at **ShermansTravel.com**.



Queenstown, in the country's far southwest, backed by The Remarkables range

# THE SOUTHERN LAKES REGION

If you have time to visit only one place in New Zealand, make it the lush plains and soaring, snowcapped peaks of the Southern Lakes Region.

Photographs by Patrick Reynolds



Don't be put off by this renowned outdoor mecca's moniker, Adventure Capital of the World. Yes, bungee (spelled *bungy* down under) jumping and jet boating are hugely popular in the Southern Lakes

Region, but the area's softer side is just as enthralling, given the stupendous natural scenery, vineyards, and quirky towns that lie in the hinterlands. Indeed, this is where you'll find **Central Otago**, the country's newest (and fastest-growing) wine region, the darling 19th-century gold rush settlement of **Arrowtown**, and astonishing **Glenorchy**, where the dramatic vistas served as the setting for Middle Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*. Capping it off, the region is also the launchpad for outings to **Milford Sound**—a deep gorge once lauded by Rudyard Kipling as the eighth Wonder of the World. All of this lies within easy reach of the resort town of **Queenstown**, the prime base for area explorations. Plan on at least five days to get the most out of a visit; make it happen by flying 2 hours to Queenstown from Auckland or Wellington and renting a car from the airport to get around.

With the glacier-fed Lake Wakatipu at its shores



ABOVE: Visitors can ply Lake Wakatipu on the historic steamship *Earnslaw*.



The stunning golf course on the cliffs of the Cape Kidnappers resort, in Hawke's Bay

## OFF THE PATH The Lodge Experience

Along with gorgeous scenery, New Zealand is justly famous for lodges that cater to specific passions. Below, three outstanding examples.

**Golfer's Paradise** The Farm at Cape Kidnappers, U.S. financier Julian Robertson's second New Zealand golf resort (the other is Kauri Cliffs), is perched on 600-foot-high cliffs overlooking Hawke's Bay. Whipped by the area's legendary winds, the dramatic course will humble even the most accomplished player. *Suites from \$320/night; capekidnappers.com*

**Trout Galore** Located in the Gowan River Valley in the northern section of South Island, Lake Rotorua Lodge offers access to some of New Zealand's—and the world's—best trout fishing. But this is no ordinary fishing camp. The guides are legendary, the food and service outstanding. *From \$350/night; lakerotorua lodge.com*

**Wine and Dine** Less than an hour's drive north of Auckland, Takatu Vineyard and Lodge offers a quick immersion into Kiwi wine culture. Each of the four glorious, high-ceilinged rooms overlooks picturesque vineyards. Rates include well-thought-out, multi-course meals and, of course, lots of fantastic wine. *From \$540/night; takatulodge.co.nz*

and the jagged 7,677-foot-high Remarkables mountain range as its backdrop, Queenstown boasts one of the world's most attractive mountain resort settings. The best landscape overview is from the summit of 2,592-foot-high Bob's Peak, reachable by **Skyline Gondola** from the outskirts of town. The summit is also home to one of three local bungee sites run by A.J. Hackett, the New Zealand maverick who invented the sport in the 1980s—his iconic **Kawarau Bridge Bungy** (the world's first bungee jump site) at the gateway to Central Otago, offers memorable sightings of intrepid souls leaping into bracing waters from a 141-foot-high bridge.

The picturesque flat plains and soaring snowcapped peaks that most of us now associate with New Zealand, thanks to *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, are actually found around **Glenorchy**, a 40-minute drive from Queenstown. Dart River's thrilling **Jet Safari**—on jet boats that speed along glacier-fed rivers at breakneck speeds—is the most popular outing here. But you can experience the setting at a slower pace on horseback. **Dart Stables**, the same outfit that equipped *The Lord of the Rings* cast with steeds, runs all-level outings, including a 2-hour Ride of the Rings that covers the first film's most memorable terrain. The trailhead to one of New Zealand's best hikes, the 20-mile-long **Routeburn Track**, is also found here; even if you're





Restaurant, which serves up Bluff oysters—a South Island specialty—with stunning lakefront views; casual **Pier 19**, known for more homespun dishes like turbot pie; and exclusive **The Bunker**, where local offerings such as venison and lamb get top billing. No visit here would be complete without sampling three utterly unpretentious local institutions: the convivial pasta and pizza bistro known as **Cow Restaurant**; **Joe's Garage**, where locals refuel at breakfast or lunch; and **Fergburger**, a hole-in-the-wall hamburger joint.

Queenstown's popularity has also led to some of the highest hotel rates in New Zealand, with peak-season prices topping \$1,000 a night at luxury hotels like the five-star **Blanket Bay**, the secluded lakeside lodge where Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt honeymooned. In comparison, centrally located **The Spire** qualifies as a smart splurge; its 10 modern rooms come with fireplaces and lakeview balconies. The best-value option, the new 19-room **Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel** near the Skyline Gondola, hosts a nightly cocktail hour that encourages guests to discuss the day's adventures over a glass of Central Otago wine.



**FROM TOP RIGHT: A Glenorchy trek organized by Dart Stables; The Remarkables room in the Queenstown Park Boutique Hotel, Queenstown; muesli with fruit and honey; hot coffee and a warm smile at Joe's Garage, Queenstown. OPPOSITE: Wai Waterfront Restaurant, in Queenstown**



St. Paul's church, in Arrowtown



## JUMPING OFF IN Arrowtown

Delightful Arrowtown, just 20 minutes from Queenstown, is the region's only site of historical significance; it morphed into a gold-mining town after the precious metal was discovered in 1862. A harrowing reminder of the era's hardships is found in the town's historic **Chinese Settlement**, where vestiges remain of the claustrophobic quarters occupied by hardscrabble Chinese gold miners who came as speculators in the late 1800s. Otherwise, Arrowtown today seems plucked from New England and dropped into the Wild West, with gorgeous foliage framing attractive period buildings along the main drag, Buckingham Street. There you'll find all manner of artisan boutiques (try the chocolate maker **Patagonia**), first-rate bistros (like **Saffron**—one of the country's best, and its sibling **Pesto**—for superb pizza and pasta), lively bars (the cozy **Blue Door**), and a wonderfully old-fashioned movie theater (the adorable **Dorothy Browns**).

## SOUTH LAKES CONTINUED

not an active hiker, it's worth doing a guided day walk with the local outfitter InfoTrack to see some of the trail's legendary riverbeds and alpine passes. After an invigorating day out, you can rejuvenate in a hot tub at Queenstown's new **Onsen Hot Pools**.

The recent ascendancy of **Central Otago**, the rugged wine region that extends to the southeast of Queenstown, has added yet another dimension to the area. Despite being the *terroir* of New Zealand's youngest vineyards—the region's first commercial crop was released in 1987—Central Otago is already expected to overtake Martinborough as the country's leading producer of pinot noir. The rocky terrain and cool climate also yield stellar pinot gris, Riesling, and gewürztraminer varietals, many of which can be sampled at **Gibbston Valley**, the area's first commercial vineyards. Other vineyards to watch include **Mt. Difficulty**, **Rippon**, and **Black Ridge Vineyard**, the world's southernmost vineyard.

Queenstown's heightened tourist appeal has fostered a robust restaurant scene, with a casual alpine flair reminiscent of Banff and Vail. That said, you'll find high-end cuisine at sophisticated **Wai Waterfront**

## JUMPING OFF IN Fiordland National Park

The majestic 3-million-acre Fiordland National Park, which claims domain over the southwestern coast of South Island, is wild and pristine. Its windswept coastline rims the Tasman Sea, while deep glacial fjords wend inland, carved into serrated snowcapped peaks. Dolphin and seal sightings are common—as are impromptu waterfalls and colorful rainbows. Indeed, the landscape is so magical, the area was deemed a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site in 1986, and today, day-tripping from Queenstown to the park's most famous fjord—the 13.6-mile **Milford Sound**—is an absolute rite of passage. For a comprehensive view, take Air Milford's 4-hour Fly-Cruise-Fly package (see "5 Smart Splurges, p.78) for a scenic flight and an intimate cruise—minus the throngs of tourists who descend by bus.

