

# NEW ZEALAND

## RANDOM THOUGHTS, TIPS AND FAVOURITE THINGS

Haere Mai – Welcome!

So many adventures, so little time! With so much variety in this big little country you should try to stay for at least three weeks, preferably longer.

If you are short on time, consider limiting yourself to the South Island. This is where the most spectacular scenery is to be found.

Personally, I wouldn't bother with the 'big' cities, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, since the best of New Zealand is to be found in its countryside and wilderness.

### USEFUL WEBSITES

The following websites are excellent and are an invaluable tool in planning a trip to New Zealand and Queenstown:

<http://www.youtube.com/purequeenstown>

<http://www.queenstown-nz.co.nz/>

<http://www.newzealand.com/travel/International/>

I'll attempt to break down the possibilities by region.

### Queenstown

NZ's adventure capital has a million ways of making you pay to be scared to death!

- Underwater trout viewing on the wharf. At \$5 it is the cheapest thrill in town.
- Bungy Jumping (or just watching). Invented in Queenstown.
- The Shotover Jet - a thrilling jet boat ride in a canyon. Jet boats were invented in NZ, by Bill Hamilton.
- Heli-Tours are a wonderful way to see the landscape. And if you have a birthday to celebrate or perhaps a marriage to propose, you could take a helicopter up into the mountains, and land in the snow for champagne. There are various chopper lines which do this from Queenstown airport.
- Good restaurants in and about Queenstown include **Wai**, **The Bunker** (a secret destination, as it has no signs), **Solera Vino** (casual French), **Les Alpes**, **Botswana Butchery**, **Gantleys** at Arthur's Point (fine dining), **Saffron** at Arrowtown, **Amisfield** at Lake Hayes, and **Gibbston Valley Winery and Restaurant** near the Kawerau bungy bridge.
- Vineyards – renowned for their Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc, but don't pass up the Pinot Gris and Riesling.
- A bar called **Minus 5**, which I am yet to visit (because boringly, I hardly drink, but I am working on this) – everything is made of ice including the glasses that you drink from.

- The Gondola ride up Bob's Peak, tandem parapenting from the top for the brave, and the bird park at the bottom of the mountain which includes a kiwi house.
- Skiing at Coronet Peak or the Remarkables. September is perfect spring skiing – beautiful days, and hopefully glorious snow.
- Golf – Queenstown has spectacular golf courses (<http://www.queenstown-nz.co.nz/information/searchresults/?location=queenstown&category=golf&listingtype=PROD>).
- Spas – the spas at the **Sofitel** Hotel (<http://www.queenstown-nz.co.nz/information/product/?productID=15001864>) (near the conference venue) or **Millbrook** at Arrowtown come highly recommended. I believe Millbrook may arrange coach transfers. Also Onsen hot pools – look at [www.onsen.co.nz](http://www.onsen.co.nz) mmm!
- Shopping – **Aotea Souvenirs** by the conference hotel (they are sponsoring our conference), **Untouched World** for good quality casual merino/wool, **Vesta** (cute cottage featuring NZ designer homewares, clothing and art – I bought the *best* hat here), **Andrea Moore** (NZ designer), **Decode** for various NZ and overseas labels, many shops selling merino, possum, jade, bone carvings, paua shell.
- **Blanket Bay** – a premier luxury lodge owned by ex-CEO Levi's, beloved by the rich and famous. You could stay here and go hunting and fishing. (<http://www.luxuryadventures.co.nz/accommodation/property/1/Blanket Bay Luxury Lodge Accommodation.htm>)
- **Punatapu** is another lovely lodge in Queenstown, and there are others. (<http://www.punatapu.com/>)

## PRE OR POST CONFERENCE TOURING

### Central Otago

Wine buffs should tour the vineyards of Central Otago (Queenstown, Wanaka, Cromwell, Bannockburn, Alexandra). These are all popular holiday destinations.

There are good golf courses, gold mining relics, dry rocky mountains, *more* Lord of the Rings scenery, and Kiwi heartland farming.

Wanaka is great for skiing too.

Sorry to say, but there are only a few trout fishing areas open this early in spring. Lakes Wakatipu (Queenstown), Wanaka, Hawea and Dunstan are open 12 months but the rivers will be closed – main season opens October 1.

### Fiordland

The wilderness of Fiordland is a must-see – a magical otherworld.

From Queenstown, you can take a day trip to fly to Milford Sound and take a boat trip. Or you can rent a car and drive there. Even better, take a few days to meander there (drive or bus) and then base yourself at Te Anau.

Driving into Milford from Te Anau is a fantastic scenic experience. At Homer Tunnel, you must stop to see the cheeky kea (mountain parrots). Kea are native to New

Zealand and notorious for their mischief and intelligence – very cute, very entertaining. Wander around the giant boulders below the sheer cliffs to spot tiny rock wrens.

Take a boat from Te Anau to the glow-worm caves. From nearby Lake Manapouri there is a wonderful day trip to magnificent Doubtful Sound (<http://www.realjourneys.co.nz/Main/Doubtful/>).

Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri will be open for fishing.

In Fiordland be prepared for heavy rain in huge quantity. This is what gives its special nature of temperate rainforest and spectacular waterfalls.

### **Stewart Island**

(<http://www.stewartisland.co.nz/>)

Stewart Island is well worth a visit – one of our favourite places. It has just one small fishing village (500 people) and the rest of the island is a forested national park with wonderful walking tracks, birdlife (this is one of the best places to see kiwi in the wild) and forest and sea views.

There is great sea fishing here. We went out on a boat with old-timer, John Leask (but don't tell him I called him that) and pulled in two or three blue cod each time we threw a line in. Then we were followed by a pod of 70 dolphins, and albatross – brilliant!

Ulva Island, (<http://www.ulva.co.nz/>) a short boat ride away, is a magical bird refuge into which native birds are being reintroduced. The main guide, Ulva, a Stewart Island native and named after the island, was my very first secretary as a baby lawyer (21 years old!). She had an uncanny ability to predict how people in my cases were going to behave. And she always knew whether I would win. She gained this knowledge not from typing the affidavits, but by studying the birth dates of the parties (and opposing counsel), and extrapolating them into complex astrological charts replete with mystical symbols, and sneaking a look at people's palms when they came in to sign documents. I paid close attention - and won most of my cases. The last time I saw Ulva, she was our guide on Ulva Island and she was literally, I kid you not, calling wild birds out of the forest and getting them to pose for me to photograph – "*Just up here, on this higher rock...*". If you see her, be sure to say hey from me. And keep your hands in your pockets!

### **Catlins**

(<http://www.catlins.org.nz/>)

If you find yourself in Invercargill, don't linger there, (although Anthony Hopkins did, when he filmed 'The World's Fastest Indian', a must-see film), but drive up the east coast of the South Island towards Dunedin, through the Catlins forest. At the very south is Curio Bay with petrified trees, and Porpoise Bay where you can often see gorgeous little Hector's dolphins in the surf. Further along the way are lovely walks, forest, waterfalls, and small villages with country pubs. There is a delightful homestay here called **Hilltop** (<http://www.hilltopaccom.co.nz/>), which by all accounts, is charming.

### **Dunedin**

Highlights of Dunedin are the Otago Peninsula for wildlife including Penguin Place where you can see yellow-eyed penguins up close, Tairaroa Head for the royal

albatross tour, fur seals and possibly sea lions, and great walks on brisk beaches patrolled by great white sharks.

**Larnach's Castle** is the only 'castle' in New Zealand. It is really just a pretend castle and was built by William Larnach, a politician who shot himself in Parliament House after finding out that his son was having an affair with his stepmother, Larnach's third wife. The garden at Larnach Castle is worth a visit in its own right, being listed as a 'Garden of National Significance' (as is **Glenfalloch** Garden. Also on the Otago Peninsula). The Castle also offers excellent accommodation, if you're looking for somewhere a little different. Amazing views.

**Olveston**, a stately home, was built by a prominent Jewish merchant, David Theomin. Dunedin is home to the world's southern most Jewish synagogue.

New Zealand's first university, Otago University (best law school in NZ, by far) is where the feisty, diminutive, Ethel Benjamin studied law and in 1897, became the second woman in the British Empire to be admitted to the Bar – and this took place at the High Court here in Dunedin, where I was also admitted. Ethel is an icon and Otago women lawyers (known as OWLS) are proud to follow in her footsteps. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel\\_Benjamin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel_Benjamin))

Dunedin was first peopled by three successive waves of Maori tribes, then settled by Scots in 1848 but over-run by Sassenachs and other heathens during the gold rush of the 1860's. Being a Scottish settlement, there is a statue of Robbie Burns in the Octagon. You will notice a resemblance to Edinburgh in the layout of the city, and there is often a skirl of bagpipes in the air.

There are good cafes, bars, music, culture, the world's steepest street, Baldwin Street - and sports to suit everyone but especially rugby and netball. Although it's not a big city (120,000 people in the greater Dunedin area), the university dominates it and so has a youthful culture.

**Plume** (my favourite fashion shop in New Zealand) is here, on George Street.

Useful Dunedin websites:

<http://www.DunedinNZ.com>

<http://www.dunedinnz.com/Home/TradeIndustryandMedia/InternationalTrade/Collateral/ProductManual/tabid/985/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

### **North of Queenstown - West Coast, Glaciers, Christchurch**

Another itinerary would see you driving from Queenstown over the Southern Alps and up the West Coast, calling in on Franz Josef (<http://www.franzjosefglacier.com/>) and Fox Glaciers (<http://www.foxguides.co.nz/>) along the way, drinking in some country pubs, and driving back over Arthur's Pass and ending up in Christchurch where you might catch your international flight.

### **Whales and Dolphins**

Or with more time, you could drive further up the West (oops West) Coast to Nelson and across to Blenheim and down the East Coast, stopping at Kaikoura to go whale watching, swimming with dolphins and fur seals, and then on to Christchurch – flattest town in NZ (after Invercargill).

## **Mount Cook**

Alternatively, from Queenstown you could drive over the Lindis Pass to Mount Cook and get amongst the glaciers and high peaks of the drier eastern side of the Southern Alps, and then up to Christchurch. You can also do this as one of the organised post-conference tours. If you choose to do this independently of the organised tour, make sure you plan an overnight stay at Lake Tekapo. The Mt John observatory is close by and the night tours up there to look at the stars are breathtaking. Plans are in motion to make the night sky at Tekapo a World Heritage Area because of the pure quality of the air in the region. See [www.earthandsky.co.nz](http://www.earthandsky.co.nz). The fishing at Tekapo is pretty good, too!

## **Auckland**

If you *must* go to Auckland, here are some tips, though Gray Cameron and the other Auckland Fellows will certainly have better ones:

- Great restaurants – Ponsonby Road and the Harbour Viaduct and High Street in the city have a good selection. And the French Café is tres bien.
- Good ferry ride on harbour over to Devonport just to see the harbour and have lunch or just a coffee (see below re NZ coffee).
- Good ferry ride a bit further to Waiheke Island – walks, beaches, cafes, and vineyards.
- Good ferry ride not so far to Rangitoto Island – the volcanic island whose silhouette is symbolic of Auckland. GREAT day walk around and up to the summit. It erupted just 600 years ago and lava flows are still being colonized. This is a great non-city thing in Auckland because it's good exercise and it's raw nature in the making...
- Kelly Tarlton's aquarium is really good – was the first in world to have Perspex viewing tunnel. And a bit further along the same harbour side road Mission Bay has some nice cafes.
- Tiritiri Matangi Island is a nice boat ride and has been/is being replanted as a refuge to reintroduce endangered native birds.
- One Tree Hill is one of 53 volcanic cones around Auckland, and has a great view, and remnants of Maori pa (fortified village) terraces.
- Into adrenaline? Bungy jump from the Skytower! Into gambling? Skytower has a casino.
- Into sailing? You can take various rides – Auckland was home to America's Cup and has highest boat ownership per head in the world...
- Museum has a very good Maori/Polynesian section. And they might recommend where to see Maori song/dance performances, which are fabulous.
- Good bookshops, art galleries (both the city one and commercial ones), NZ fashion stores (High Street in the city and Newmarket are best) etc.

## **Northland**

- Great beaches and bushy bays and islands (as the name Bay of Islands suggests).
- You can hire kayaks and bicycles (but please note that these are not sea-going), and charter boats for big game fishing or scuba diving or sightseeing.
- Waitangi – New Zealand's keystone treaty with Maori, the nation's founding document was signed here in 1840. Treaty House has great history and a majestic waka (Maori war canoe).
- The kauri forest at Waipoua just north of Dargaville is one of NZ's most special places. These majestic trees have more timber than redwoods – just not as high. And there's a great kauri museum at Matakoho – fascinating history of logging and kauri gum extraction.
- Cape Reinga is a big day trip – maybe you could take a bus tour to get commentary. Never excites me that much (except for Maori legend that all souls jump off here to go back to their ancestral homeland).

## **Between Auckland and Northland there are two GREAT places.**

- Near Warkworth is Goat Island Marine Reserve, which you can drive to, park, dive and snorkel or take a glass bottom boat. Schools of fish come to be fed at the beach, and it's a very popular picnic place in weekends. One of the world's first marine reserves.
- Poor Knights Islands marine reserve is fabulous for snorkelling and diving – Jacques Cousteau called it one of his 10 top dive sites. It's only about 50 miles south of Bay of Islands, and charter boats go out from Tutukaka.

## **Coromandel Peninsula**

Gray Cameron is your man on the Coromandel. I have never been there but I know that it has gorgeous beaches and forests – and Gray Cameron!

## **The Volcanic Plateau**

South of Auckland is another very special NZ region – the Volcanic Plateau.

- Rotorua (<http://www.rotoruanz.com/>) has boiling mudpools, geysers, steaming lakes and other great geothermal features; most strikingly a pervasive stench of rotten eggs which actually starts to feel healthful after a while, and strong Maori culture including a Maori village amongst the steam – where Maori used the heat to cook, and bathe. The Polynesian Spa and others have wonderful natural mineral hot springs with curative powers (and great mud packs).
- Taupo is NZ's biggest lake and the crater of one of the biggest eruptions the world has known – you can still see cliffs of pumice layered by successive eruptions. It is a famous trout fishing spot now, as is the Tongariro River which flows into it.
- Tongariro National Park was the world's second after Yellowstone; and the biggest mountain, Mt Ruapehu has a crater lake when it isn't spewing mud or ash. You can ski on this volcano, keeping an ear open for the eruption and lahar alarms. Mt

Tongariro has a fabulous though strenuous full day hike over the summit and down the other side, but there are many fine shorter walks. There is a luxurious hotel called The Chateau here.

### **SOME GREAT KIWI THINGS:**

- You must do at least one forest walk in the wilderness while in New Zealand. Long or short – it doesn't matter – the best thing about this country is to experience silence and solitude that leaves you feeling as though you might be the only person in the world. Precious.
- Remember, no matter where in New Zealand you happen to be, you are never far from a beach. New Zealand has the same length of coastline as the USA, just not so much in between!
- You are also never far from a rugby (be sure to cheer for Otago or The All Blacks) or netball game! September is still winter sports season, and you can see both sports at local club level in small towns or national championship games in the big towns. And afterwards you're never far from a bar....
- Coffee – is good in NZ. Joy Feinberg has pronounced it to be the best in the world. Though not grown here, it is roasted and ground fresh by many cafes. You will learn that long black and flat white are not racist terms – the first is an American and second is ditto with milk. You will never touch Starbucks again (except maybe in China)..
- Booze - Kiwi wine is fine – as referenced in Queenstown section. Beer – craft beers are outstanding and in Dunedin, Emerson's the best (and Mr and Mrs Emerson live next door to us), though Speights is the cult beer of the messy student masses and 'real Southern Men'.
- Food – great produce everywhere. Lamb – but you already know that. Also venison (although it is a little deer !). And seafood – snapper in the North and blue cod in the South, salmon, mussels, paua (abalone) and crayfish (lobster). Bluff oysters are to die for if you are an oyster lover. Unfortunately I do not think these are in season in September, so you will have to come back.
- NZ ice-cream (including Tip Top and Kapiti) is great – try hokey pokey. New Zealand butter is delicious as are the many good cheeses. So are olive oil, cheese, chocolate... Manuka honey is not only tasty but has proven medicinal qualities. NZ liquorice is also very good, and there are a good variety of delicious (love plum) New Zealand chutneys.
- North Island has citrus fruit and avocados, and the cooler South has apples and tastier, crisper vegetables. You're too early for strawberries, raspberries, cherries, peaches, nectarines and apricots, but come back in summer and feast to your heart's content.
- Pavlova is a giant meringue dessert/cake with a hard crust and a marshmallow centre. It is traditionally served smothered in cream, which is piled high with strawberries or kiwi – delicious! Pavlova was invented in New Zealand. Do not let any Australian tell you otherwise. I happen to do a mean Pav. But it is the only thing I can cook.

- Souvenirs – Maori carving in wood, bone, jade are favourite things. But also good are leather, wool and especially clothing of Merino fine wool mixed with possum fur (which is an eco-fur as the introduced possums are killing our forests).... Also wood, pottery, glass, art, clothes, music, books... etc.
- Paw Paw (papaya) Ointment, Trilogy ‘Everything Balm’ and Manuka honey skin products are popular New Zealand products from health stores.

### **ACCOMMODATION:**

Luxury Lodges – there are several around Queenstown and some in the North Island.

Farmstays – for a real New Zealand farm experience

Bed & Breakfasts or homestays provide a wonderful way to experience New Zealand – highly recommended (refer books).

### **LUXURY COACH TOURS:**

I have heard enthusiastic reviews about an outfit called **Orlova South** (<http://www.orlovasouth.co.nz/>) – who do luxury coach tours.

### **GARDENS:**

I recently heard about **Maple Glen** (<http://www.mapleglen.co.nz/>) – near Wyndham in Southland – the whole valley is a garden with lots of resident parrots.

See also **Larnach Castle** [www.larnachcastle.co.nz](http://www.larnachcastle.co.nz) and **Glenfalloch** [www.otagopeninsulatrust.co.nz](http://www.otagopeninsulatrust.co.nz) (both mentioned above).

### **MOVIES:**

Whale Rider (Wonderful! But be warned, you will need 3 hankies)

Once Were Warriors (very violent but yes, it is good)

The World’s Fastest Indian (Anthony Hopkins – Shot in Invercargill – the film, not Anthony Hopkins)

Lord of the Rings (my secretary was an orc)

The Piano (bleak – makes me want to jump off a cliff!)

Topp Twins (great yodelling lesbian twins with affectionately satirical variety acts)

### **IN A CATEGORY OF THEIR OWN:**

Flight of the Conchords – self styled ‘the Fourth Best Folk-Rock Parody Duo’ (HBO TV series on DVD and CDs - I *love* them)

‘South’ – TV series on DVD - hosted by Marcus Lush, who takes an unorthodox tour around the southernmost nooks and crannies of the South Island.

### **MUSIC:**

Bic Runga

Kiri Te Kanawa

Crowded House

Dave Dobbyn

**BOOKS:**

Kerry Hulme (*The Bone People* won the Booker prize in 1985. Was said by family lawyers at the time to set NZ back about 20 years in its attitude toward violence against children).

Maurice Shadbolt (his trilogy on the Maori wars was excellent but I don't think he's written anything relevant for some years...)

Patricia Grace (anything written by this author is brilliant. Try *Tu* or *Little Baby No Eyes*)

Christina Stead

Janet Frame

Joy Cowley

Ngaio Marsh

Witi Ihimaera (*Whale Rider*; Also worth reading is *The Matriarch* or *Bulibasha*)

Annie Villiers *Apollo's Line* (one of New Zealand's greatest novels, according to Annie, who made me put this in – and yes, it is indeed very good.)

**WHAT TO BRING:**

Warm outdoor clothing with windproof and waterproof outdoor layers

Scarves, hats, gloves etc

Casual clothing – you won't need anything very dressy

Insect repellent, especially for Fiordland and the West Coast

Good walking/hiking shoes, depending on how active you plan to be

Take heed – there are no dangerous animals in this country, but the weather can change drastically, rapidly and often. There is a song about this (by Crowded House), called Four Seasons in One Day. Well it is true, so dress accordingly. Layers are the key to safe and comfortable outdoor adventuring.

**REMEMBER TO:**

Drive on the left

Speak English (but with your lips nearly closed and unmoving, and your vowels mangled in the back of your throat)

Refrain from tipping – unless service is really special.

**SPECIAL INTERESTS:**

If anybody has any special (or even peculiar) interests eg. birdwatching, diving, rugby, shopping, fishing, hunting, knitting etc. and want to ask questions, please feel free to email me and I'll do my best to help.

See you in Queenstown!

Kia Kite Ano

**ANITA CHAN**  
**June 2010**