



# FROM LUXE TO LESS IN NEW ZEALAND

Urban, edgy or action-packed. Cool and breezy or a rustic sojourn. No matter what kind of holiday you want, New Zealand's North Island offers it all. And it's waiting for you just across the Tasman.

TEXT **RENAE LEITH-MANOS**

**NEW ZEALAND HAS** come of age. With its stunning scenery and high-end lodge accommodation, international travellers say the lodges are one of New Zealand's great tourist attractions. Many offer over-the-top service, food and activities, and price tags starting at a whopping A\$2000 per night. However, there is accommodation that's still reasonably priced and at these places you can enjoy the same scenery and activities at a fraction of the cost. No matter what your budget, you can have a fantastic driving holiday in northern New Zealand, and temperatures right up until July are still in the early-20s, so it's also a great winter escape.

## AUCKLAND

Many visitors fly to **Auckland** just to shop, as the fashion is seriously good as well as diverse, and the stores are stylish and showcase local stars. For local fashion, check out **Kate Sylvester** [www.katesylvester.com](http://www.katesylvester.com), **Carlson** [www.tanyacarlson.com](http://www.tanyacarlson.com), **Robyn Mathieson** [www.robynmathieson.co.nz](http://www.robynmathieson.co.nz), and **Miss Crabb** [www.misscrabb.com](http://www.misscrabb.com), all on Ponsonby Road. Elegant

coffee shops and bakeries are dotted in between, to stop, reflect and re-charge the batteries.

There is so much interesting accommodation in this city, the only challenge is deciding where to stay. **Mollies in St Mary's Bay** is the pick for honeymooners or a 'special occasion' stay. A unique and stunning 12-room lodge, with rooms beautifully restored, this is where celebrities choose to stay. Everything is white, and many rooms have baby grand pianos and are filled with eclectic antiques the owners picked up during their 30-plus years living in Europe and America. The highlight is having opera singers perform each night in the drawing room.

There are several day trips you can take from Auckland, including the gannet bird colony at **Muriwai Beach** (where there's also superb west-coast scenery), or you can sample several of the **Kumeu Wineries**, including **Coopers Creek**, **Kerr Farm** or **Nobilo**. There are hundreds of different and well-paved walks ranging from 15 minutes to several hours along the **Waitakere Ranges**, too.





Bay Of Islands.

**Waiheke Island** can be reached by ferry from Auckland and is home to an eclectic mix of winemakers, olive growers and white-collar executives who commute to downtown Auckland by ferry.

#### MORE INFO

**Gannet Colony and scenic day trips:** [www.arc.govt.nz/auckland-regional-parks/western-parks/muriwai.cfm](http://www.arc.govt.nz/auckland-regional-parks/western-parks/muriwai.cfm)

**Wineries near Auckland:** [www.kumeuwinecountry.co.nz](http://www.kumeuwinecountry.co.nz)

**Waitakere Ranges Walks:** [www.arc.govt.nz/arc/auckland-regional-parks/western-parks](http://www.arc.govt.nz/arc/auckland-regional-parks/western-parks)

**Waiheke Island:** [www.waihekenz.com](http://www.waihekenz.com)

### LUXE MOLLIES

**Where:** St Mary's Bay, Auckland. **Contact:** +64 9 376 3489; [www.mollies.co.nz](http://www.mollies.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$435 per night for a junior suite.

### MID SCENIC CIRCLE AIREDALE HOTEL

Auckland's first Art Deco high-rise office building has been transformed into this stylish three-star-plus hotel.

**Where:** Auckland. **Contact:** +64 9 374 1741; [www.scenic-circle.co.nz](http://www.scenic-circle.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$195 per night.

### LESS HERITAGE HOTEL

You can walk to many of Auckland's attractions from the Heritage Hotel.

**Where:** Auckland. **Contact:** +64 9 379 8553; [www.heritageauckland.co.nz](http://www.heritageauckland.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$140 per night (last-minute rate).

## BAY OF ISLANDS

Everyone in Auckland talks about the **Bay Of Islands**, and when you see the stretch of ocean filled with grassy islands of all shapes and sizes, it's easy to see why. At the heart of the area is a town called **Russell**, believed to be the oldest town in New Zealand and is as quaint as it gets. It's the perfect base from which to explore. Gorgeous weatherboard homes, hotels and restaurants line the sea front, where a ribbon of grass and golden sand is the perfect spot to enjoy a dinner of fish and chips and a bottle of local sauvignon blanc at sunset. Otherwise, local spots like **Kamakura (+64 9 403 7771)** serve great NZ cuisine, or there's the local gourmet favourite **The Gables (+64 9 403 7670)**.

There are over 120 islands (depending on what you call an island) and over 20 different day cruises to fish, sightsee, spot dolphins and whales or provide historical information. Twenty-minute ferries carry passengers to neighbouring **Paihia**, another more modern coastal village packed with tourist shops, bars and lovely restaurants.

**Waitangi**, about 45 minutes away, is the treaty ground where multi-cultural New Zealand was officially established in 1840. It is a must-visit to begin to understand both the similarities and the differences in the histories of our neighbours.

"Enjoy a dinner of fish and chips and a bottle of local sauvignon blanc at sunset."

### LUXE ORONGO BAY HOMESTEAD

At Orongo Bay Homestead tariffs generally include a lavish five-course dinner each night, prepared by the two hosts with local produce. Everything from homemade chocolates to tea and coffee are included. The four suites located in a stand-alone building in the garden are refurbished regularly.

**Where:** Russell, Bay Of Islands. **Contact:** +64 9 403 7527; [www.thehomestead.co.nz](http://www.thehomestead.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$305 per night.

### MID TE PA HELIOS

Reminiscent of accommodation on the Greek islands, set atop a cliff three separate accommodation suites have flawless views of the Bay Of Islands and beyond.

**Where:** Russell, Bay Of Islands. **Contact:** +64 9 403 7229; [www.tepahelios.com](http://www.tepahelios.com) **How much:** From A\$210 per night.

### LESS HANANUI LODGE

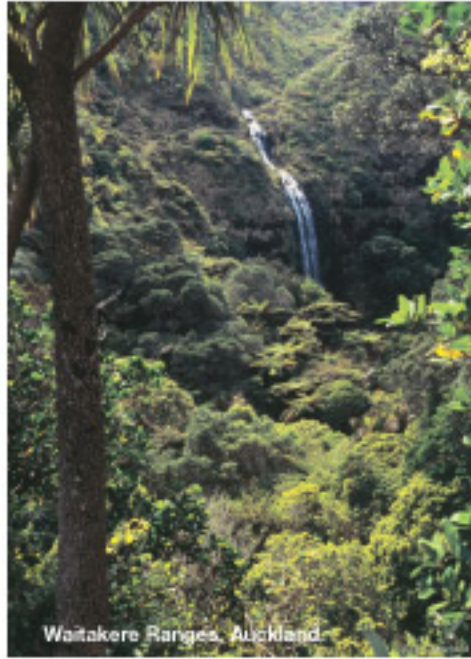
Right in the middle of Russell, this is one of the few motels on the waterfront. Simple motel accommodation in a prime spot, you need to book in advance in summer months.

**Where:** Russell, Bay Of Islands. **Contact:** +64 9 403 7875; [www.hananui.co.nz](http://www.hananui.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$95 per night.





Bay Of Islands.



Waitakere Ranges, Auckland.



Waiheke Island.



90 Mile Beach, North Island.



Doubtless Bay, North Island.



The South Island's Terrace Downs resort, Mt Hutt.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GARETH EYRES, DESTINATION NORTHLAND, BEN CRAWFORD, NICK SERVIAN CENTRE PHOTO CORBIS





## NORTHLAND

With so much flawless coastline on the way north from Auckland, you may wonder if it's worth the trek that extra hour or so to **Northland** – the northern most part of the **North Island** – but it truly is. At the tip is **90 Mile Beach**, a huge expanse of beautiful coast which seems to go on forever. According to the native Maori culture it truly is Heaven, as this is where the spirits of New Zealanders go when they die, passing through the northern most tip and into the water.

The largest town in the area is **Mangonui**, overlooking **Doubtless Bay**, which serves some of the best fish and chips in New Zealand, if not the world. Although Mangonui is parochial, it has restaurants, take-away shops and a pub which make it a great place to kick back for a few days.

**Coopers Cafe (+64 9 406 0860)** serves sensational homemade food all day, as good as anything you'll find in Australia, while **The Galley Restaurant & Bar (+64 9 406 1233)** has great country-style meals and warm, welcoming service. **The Mangonui Hotel** is a classic, complete with Barney the talking cockatoo, double shots of spirits as standard (unless you ask for less) and a beer jug wall where, for a minimal fee, you can have your own schooner ready and waiting. It's one of the most beautiful locations in the world for a bar, with uninterrupted views of the ocean.

### MORE INFO

[www.northlandnz.com](http://www.northlandnz.com)

## LUXE KAURI CLIFFS

This five-star superlodge and golf course helicopters guests in and has 11 guest cottages set on the luxurious grounds. It's high-end luxury and unforgettable for honeymooners, but you can drive in and have a look if you're passing.

**Where:** Matauri Bay, Northland. **Contact:** +64 9 407 0010; [www.kauricliffs.com](http://www.kauricliffs.com) **How much:** From A\$845 per night.

## MID CARRINGTON

Set on 3000 acres, this sprawling Tuscan-style estate includes a winery, a high-end restaurant, horse riding, golf and tennis. Lodge accommodation includes 10 spacious luxury suites, and there are also separate villas with two-bedroom luxury accommodation.

**Where:** Karikari Peninsula, Northland. **Contact:** +64 9 408 7222; [www.carrington.co.nz](http://www.carrington.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$305 per night.

## LESS BY THE BAY

This self-contained accommodation is set right on the beachfront, 20 metres from the sand. There are four apartments of different sizes – three have complete kitchens, laundries and balconies for alfresco dining. Excellent value for money.

**Where:** Coopers Beach, Northland. **Contact:** +64 9 406 1268; [www.bythebay.co.nz](http://www.bythebay.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$175 per night.



## SKIING DOWN SOUTH

The South Island of New Zealand boasts some of the best winter conditions in the world, with scenery to rival Europe's most lavish mountain resort towns.

TEXT **SALLY HAMMOND**

### THE SOUTH ISLAND

If it's a winter wonderland you want, New Zealand's South Island is the spot. Just hire a car, some skis, grab a map and go.

**Queenstown:** A real party town, Queenstown is where celebrities love to stay and take part in winter sports, such as heli-skiing, while enjoying stunning views of the lake and The Remarkables mountain range. The town has a wonderful array of restaurants, bars, pubs and countless off-mountain activities.

**Mt Hutt & Methven:** Multiple ski areas for all levels, located 91 kilometres from Christchurch International Airport, near the Canterbury Plains. A wide range of off-mountain activities includes horse riding and walking trails.

**Mackenzie Country:** Take a scenic drive from Christchurch to where much of *The Lord Of The Rings* was filmed in the beautiful Mackenzie Country. Enjoy awesome scenery, skiing, hiking, horse riding, scenic flights, golf or mountain biking. **Wanaka:** There are several ski fields for all levels in Wanaka, an easy day trip from Queenstown. The area boasts heli-skiing, skiing, golfing, fishing, restaurants and all types of accommodation.

### MORE INFO

[www.nzski.com](http://www.nzski.com)

## LUXE TERRACE DOWNS

Terrace Downs is a luxury golf course resort located just one hour from Christchurch, with accommodation including beautifully appointed villas and chalets.

**Where:** Near Methven. **Contact:** +64 3 318 6943; [www.terrace Downs.co.nz](http://www.terrace Downs.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$310 per night.

## MID BLUE PEAKS LODGE

Blue Peaks has motel-style accommodation nestled on a rise overlooking the town of Queenstown.

**Where:** Five minutes walk from the centre of Queenstown. **Contact:** +64 3 442 9224; [www.bluepeaks.co.nz](http://www.bluepeaks.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$105 per night (without kitchen).

## LESS LAKE OHAU LODGE

The lodge, located on the shore of Lake Ohau just 15 minutes from the snowfields, has 62 rooms all with ensuite bathrooms.

**Where:** Lake Ohau. **Contact:** +64 3 438 9885; [www.ohau.co.nz](http://www.ohau.co.nz) **How much:** From A\$50 per night.

All prices are correct at the time of printing and are subject to seasonal variation, or may change without notice. Conditions apply. 🐾