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COSTA RICA NEW ZEALAND MONGOLIA PERFUMERY TOURS

ADVENTURES IN THE ISLAND COUNTRY

There will only be a shortage of days to your trip, but never of things to do and places to see in New Zealand. Start off with a week of awesome explorations in the ‘land of the long white cloud’ – from North and South Islands to the many beautiful offshore isles in between. WORDS BY KAT MODELO

BAY OF THE ISLANDS

From Auckland, take a scenic route over the “City of Sails” aboard a private helicopter to the Bay of Islands. The next hour allows glimpses of greens and blues of the North Island below, giving you a preview of what’s ahead. Endless turquoise waters, white sand beaches and verdant rainforests will welcome your arrival at the sub-tropical peninsula, with no less than 144 islands surrounding the picturesque bay.

That gives you more than a hundred reasons to set sail and explore as many of them as possible aboard a luxurious catamaran. If you’re not sailing on glassy waters, you’ll be plunging into its depths, discovering a wealth of marine life along the way. Dolphins, seals and blue penguins are just some of the creatures you’ll meet in one of your swims. You can also discover your own pit stops in the form of secluded white sandy beaches to catch some rays.

Just when you’re wondering what’s for dinner tonight, you’ll be handed a rod for deep-sea fishing. Meals can’t get any more exciting than having your fresh catch of the day star at the dinner table, cooked to perfection by your private chef.

The day’s explorations are best ended at **Eagles Nest**, an architectural masterpiece sitting on the peninsula’s tip. Stunning views are a standard in each of the five ultra-modern villas, and so are heated infinity pools and Jacuzzis.



Opposite page:
Abel Tasman National Park

This page:
Top to bottom: Rahimoana Villa, Eagles Nest;
A catamaran sailing near the island; Infinity pool with a view



Opposite page:
Top to bottom: Outdoor deck facing
the beach, Split Apple Retreat;
Abel Tasman National Park

This page:
Lake Taupo fronting the lodge,
©Relais & Chateaux-Huka
Lodge, New Zealand

LAKE TAUPO

Another two hour’s flight on a helicopter takes you to Lake Taupo, New Zealand’s largest lake at 238sq mi. Its freshwaters are known sites for sailing, kayaking and water-skiing. To get you properly acquainted with its friendly waters, you can hire small boats and kayaks to the isolated coves and beaches encircling the area. One of the lake’s main tributaries, the Tongariro River is a celebrated destination for fly-fishing. Its wealthy reserve of both rainbow and brown trout has lured many fishing hobbyists and professionals to its streams.

To get to the crystal-clear waters of Tongariro, hop on a four-wheel drive with your skilled fishing guides for a short, leisurely ride. You’ll first learn the basics of fly-fishing at the foot of the river, where the scenic views should motivate the challenge. Full-day fishing trips also include picnic lunches and the pleasure of lunching on your day’s catch.



Another must-see in Taupo is Huka Falls, located along the country’s longest Waikato River. Huka, which means ‘foam’, is an appropriate name for the waterfalls. Strong currents and an impressive 11-m drop results to the water’s frothy appearance.

For uninterrupted views of the Waikato River, take residence at **Huka Lodge**, which offers the cosiest accommodations fronting the raging waters of the famed river. The same views follow you in the Main Lodge, where a Michelin-starred chef serves a menu that praises the region’s freshest seafood.

ROTORUA

By now, you’ll be well adjusted to the environment, ready for more action-packed sightseeing. Following yet another scenic helicopter transfer, ride over Huka Falls to the fascinating geothermal region of Waimangu. Covered in unique landscapes and steaming volcanic crater lakes, it is also a site of a protected reserve with many areas to explore.

Start off with a hike around the lakes and lava domes surrounding the inactive Mount Tarawera, the historic volcano that caused the largest eruption in the country. You can also take a closer look at its crater with longer treks to the summit.

Next, explore the Whakarewarewa Forest on mountain bike. Your private guide will steer you through lush ferns and gigantic California redwoods. As a treat, lunch will be served picnic-style underneath the trees.

With enough energy, head to the world-famous Kaituna River to paddle its grade-V rapids, which runs through the world’s highest commercially rafted waterfall, the Tutea Falls at about seven metres high.

Your guides will be sure to reward your hard work for the day with some downtime, soaking and unwinding in natural thermal pools and mud baths before flying you back to Huka Lodge for dinner.



ABEL TASMAN NATIONAL PARK

The next day, fly to the southwestern tip of North Island, to the bustling beachside capital of Wellington. You’ll be greeted by its lovely harbour and delightful café and shopping culture. You’re in for a quick treat in the “City of Cool” just before continuing on your journey to the depths of the country’s hushed regions.

Moore Wilson’s market, brimming with fresh produce, is the place to indulge in the tastes of the city. Make sure to stop for lunch in one of the charming restaurants nearby to sample local swordfish specialties.

A 45-minute chopper’s flight away is the Abel Tasman National Park, your fitting first destination in the South Island. Although it is the country’s smallest of 14 national parks, it is of impeccable beauty, featuring sun-kissed beaches, granite cliffs and natural rock formations. Disturb its peaceful, crystal-clear waters on a double sea-kayak, paddling through hidden lagoons and sheltered coves and taking a stop at Tonga Island to witness a colony of fur seals sunbathing on the rocks. You’ll also meet the giant crayfish and a snorkelling or diving session introduces you to more sea creatures living beneath the waters.

The nearby **Split Apple Retreat** is the perfect base when exploring the national park. Apart from heavenly oceanfront rooms with private decks and gardens, reservations come with decadent treatments and fresh, gourmet dishes with your health and wellness in mind.

The following morning, just before bidding the Abel Tasman National Park adieu, you’ll find yourself gearing up for a horseback trek around its forests and deserted beaches. A great farewell would be a gourmet picnic lunch in a quiet spot within the park.





LAKE WANAKA

A little over three hours later, you'll find yourself settling in the heart of the South Island. You won't even notice the longer than usual journey, as it is accompanied by breathtaking glimpses of the Southern Alps. The picture-perfect Lake Wanaka in the Otago Region, spanning a length of 45km is the pride of the south. It's a perfect year-round destination, being equally enchanting when covered in snow during winter from June to August. Snow aside, you'll enjoy outdoor recreations against a panorama of the calm lake at any given time.



Set off on a four-wheel drive to Rob Roy Valley for a leisurely walk along the Matukituki River – a stream flowing from Mount Aspiring National Park that empties into Lake Wanaka. A pathway dotted with old beech trees lead you to the Rob Roy Glacier and the alpine meadow beneath it. With surrounding rock cliffs, waterfalls, river valleys and hanging glaciers, it is a truly amazing spot to indulge in a scenic lunch. No matter how absorbed you are in the scenery, you have to remember to keep an eye or an ear out for avalanches!

Nestled within thick, silver birch trees on the shores of Lake Wanaka, **Whare Kea** looks as though it floats seamlessly on the waters. Besides elegant rooms and suites, daily changing menus are a highlight – using a selection of fresh ingredients from the chef's own garden, artisans and local markets. Although, the peak of luxury is found at the Alpine Chalet perched high up in the Southern Alps, private helicopter transfers, spacious rooms and bespoke adventures included.

Opposite page:
Tiger Moth experience
©Relais & Chateaux-Whare Kea, New Zealand

This page:
Top to Bottom: Lake Wanaka views,
Alpine Chalet,
©Relais & Chateaux-Whare Kea, New Zealand



OTAGO REGION

Otago, a region of diverse landscapes deserves a full day's worth of explorations. From rolling hills to quiet suburbs, head to its vineyards that are known for producing the finest varieties of Pinot noir. Central Otago is home to a winemaking region lying some 45 degrees below the equator. Here, the country's award-winning wines are grown and processed.

Visit the family-owned vineyards of Maude, where a husband-and-wife team of winemakers will not only tell you the story, but also walk you through its vines and cellars. Have your fill touring and tasting handcrafted wines, before enjoying lunch in the nearby quaint town of Wanaka.

Following this truly relaxing morning is a bit of action by the Niger River. From canyoning waterfalls, you'll be navigating through caves and rock formations before rappelling down the cliffs atop the rapids.

Like a well-deserved prize, Whare Kea's award-winning chef awaits back at the lodge, preparing for your private cooking class. Dinner is served with a glass or two of Maude's finest Pinot noir and a side of chatter about the day's vibrant events.

A FINAL SURPRISE

What better way to send you off than with a memorable 20-minute adventure in the skies? The meadow behind Whare Kea is a ground where a vintage Tiger Moth aircraft takes off to hover guests above Lake Wanaka and Mount Aspiring National Park. Bid these familiar sights farewell from the open cockpit, with the sun in your face and the wind in your hair. **T**

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WEATHER CHECK

October and November are autumn months in New Zealand and December marks the start of summer.
