

SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA

QANTAS

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE IT
ON THE PLANE
YOUR MAGAZINE
TO KEEP

FOOD + DRINK SPECIAL

THE HOTTEST NEW RESTAURANTS — A CRAFT DISTILLERY TRAIL — NEIL PERRY'S COMEBACK



AND A
TASTE OF
NEW ZEALAND...

HUKA LODGE, NZ

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Beyond



Lake Mackenzie in Fiordland National Park (above); a section of the Paparoa Track (opposite)

Rambling along mountain passes, cutting through the snow on black ski runs, relaxing at a luxury lakeside hotel, sipping world-class wine and witnessing a natural lightshow... It's time to go back to New Zealand and explore its best experiences.

THE HIKES

South Island **Routeburn Track**

Tracing high-altitude passes framed by towering peaks and serene forest paths fringed with ferns, this 33-kilometre, three-day trail from near Glenorchy to close to Te Anau rewards the intrepid hiker with full-scale immersion in epic landscapes. It connects two of New Zealand's spectacular national parks – Mount Aspiring and Fiordland – and there are plenty of distractingly picturesque vistas along the way but the terrain can be challenging and is best tackled with a guide. Try **Ultimate Hikes** (ultimatehikes.co.nz).

South Island **Paparoa Track**

When the Paparoa Track opened in 2019, it was the first Great Walk of New Zealand launched in 25 years. And it was excellent news for cyclists, too. Over 56 kilometres – allow three days to hike it or two on a bike – adventurers can follow the trails of early settlers in the Paparoa Ranges, winding through rainforest that hides a network of limestone caves. There are no guided options available yet but **Paparoa Shuttles** (paparoashuttles.co.nz) offers transport services, such as pick-ups at the starting point at Smoke-ho car park near Blackball and at Waikori Road car park near Punakaiki, where the track ends.



Matteo Colombo, Jase Blair



THE SKI VACATIONS

North Island Mount Ruapehu

If the idea of skiing on an active volcano doesn't thrill you, you're on the wrong holiday. Should you need a (slightly) less daring reason to visit Mount Ruapehu, the North Island's most memorable ski destination, consider this: it includes Whakapapa, New Zealand's largest ski area, and its sister district, Turoa – accessed on the same pass – which has the longest vertical drop in Australasia and the highest chair lift in the country. Stay at the elegant **Chateau Tongariro Hotel** (chateau.co.nz) and wake up each morning to a view of the volcano.

South Island Wanaka

If you were judging on looks alone, Wanaka would top any poll of New Zealand's ski fields. But the appeal of these popular slopes is more than skin deep for powder hounds: Treble Cone is one of the country's most challenging ski areas, with 45 per cent of the terrain rated black. A lively lakeside après-ski scene and luxurious accommodation at **Whare Kea Lodge** (wharekealodge.com) ensure even the most timid snow bunnies will have a good time.



The Whakapapa slopes at Mount Ruapehu

THE CITY BREAKS

North Island Auckland

New Zealand's biggest city is its most beguiling metropolis. Hang out at a cool café in the Wynyard Quarter, explore Waitematā Harbour on a former America's Cup yacht or walk to the top of Auckland's highest natural point, Maungawhau (Mount Eden), and watch the boats from above. The new ultra-sustainable **Hotel Britomart** (thehotelbritomart.com) is the stuff of interior-design dreams – exposed brickwork, wood panelling, marble finishes and soft bouclé furnishings – with chic guestrooms stealing views of the harbour and Takutai Square, the heart of the neighbourhood.

South Island Dunedin

Built on the edge of an ancient volcanic crater using spoils from the gold rush, Dunedin has always made the most of nature's riches. Grand Victorian mansions, ornate gardens and soaring neo-Gothic spires grace the shores of Otago Harbour, which offers up its own gems – the salmon and Blue Moki you'll find in local restaurants and at Otago Farmers Market every Saturday. After delving into the buzzing Warehouse Precinct, rest up at the new **Ebb-Dunedin** (ebb-dunedin.co.nz), a sleek glass-fronted hotel that suits the city to a tee, its interiors inspired by the land, sea and sky.

THE WINE REGIONS

North Island Hawke's Bay

Raise a glass where New Zealand's wine industry began in this crescent-shaped district on the east coast. Established in 1851 by French monks, **Mission Estate** (missionestate.co.nz) planted the seed for what has grown into a thriving local scene, with more than 30 cellar doors now welcoming visitors. Sample some of the region's finest, such as syrah, merlot, chardonnay and pinot gris, at the contemporary and sustainable **Elephant Hill Winery** (elephanthill.co.nz) or French-influenced **Church Road** (church-road.com).

North Island Wairarapa

The locals have been trying to keep it a secret but word is out: the pocket-sized Wairarapa region, only a short drive from Wellington, is producing some of New Zealand's most outstanding wines, including award-winning pinot noir and crisp Burgundy-style whites. The bonus? You won't need to argue over who's on designated-driver duty because there are enough wineries within walking distance of the pretty town of Martinborough to make a day of it. Be sure to call in at **Martinborough Vineyard** (martinborough-vineyard.co.nz) and **Ata Rangi** (atarangi.co.nz).



Cape Kidnappers at Hawke's Bay



THE ISLANDS



Halfmoon Bay on Stewart Island (top); the ferry sailing between Auckland and Waiheke Island

Stewart Island

What lies even further south than the South Island? Stewart Island, where you're virtually guaranteed to see a kiwi bird. This wild isle's numbers are impressive: just 30 kilometres from the shores of the South Island, it has 280 kilometres of walking tracks and barely 28 kilometres of road. More than 85 per cent of this water-locked haven is national park and an estimated 20,000 kiwis have their home here, along with blue penguins and yellow-eyed penguins. And here's the clincher: it's a prime spot for catching a glimpse of the aurora australis.

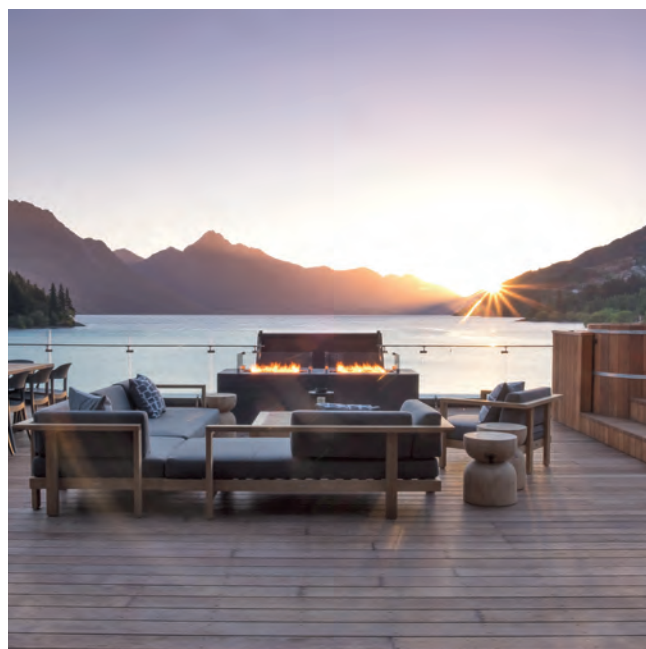
Waiheke Island

It's amazing what a difference 40 minutes can make. That's all the time it takes on the ferry from Auckland to reach Waiheke Island, 92 square kilometres of vineyards and white-sand beaches. The isle's best-known attractions are its 30-odd wineries – try **Stonyridge Vineyard** (stonyridge.com) and **Mudbrick Vineyard** (mudbrick.co.nz) – but there's also a flourishing creative community that shows its works locally. Pick up a painting, ceramic or carving at **Space Art Gallery** (spaceartgallery.co.nz) and **Toi Gallery** (toigallery.com).

THE LODGES

North Island Huka Lodge

A tranquil setting on the banks of the Waikato River? Lodgings fit for a queen? (Former guest Queen Elizabeth II, that is). Helicopter transfers, a vast wine cellar and in-room massages? It's no wonder Huka Lodge (hukalodge.co.nz), about four hours drive from Auckland, is renowned but it's the layers of luxury cocooning guests that sets this hotel apart. And if you have something special to celebrate there are hidden-away spots – in an orchard, on the jetty (below) or by the fire – for private dining à deux.



South Island Eichardt's Private Hotel

With only seven suites tucked inside its historic walls, Eichardt's Private Hotel (eichardts.com; above), on the shores of Queenstown's luminous Lake Wakatipu, has long lured travellers with its heady mix of opulence and intimacy. Now its new spa experience is taking indulgence to the next level. Housed within the vault that once stored the region's gold-rush bounty, the couples' spa suite includes a relaxation area where a glass of Amisfield pinot noir rosé will ease any cares that the Manuka honey facial couldn't fix.

THE ROAD TRIPS

North Island Thermal Explorer Highway

The detours are exciting on this 767-kilometre circuit in the heart of the North Island, which starts and finishes in Auckland. In Rotorua, stroll 20 metres above the forest floor at the Redwoods Treewalk and stop off at Waitomo Caves for an underground boat ride through grottos illuminated by glittering glow-worms. The journey will take about six days to catch all the highlights, including Lake Taupo and the active geysers at the Orakei Korako Geothermal Park & Cave.

South Island Alpine Lakes Itinerary

Glaciers, lakes, mountains and canyons: the 611-kilometre Alpine Lakes Itinerary, from Christchurch to Queenstown, takes in just about every natural wonder New Zealand is famous for. Allow at least four or five days to make the most of this remarkable route, which scales the country's highest peak, Aoraki (Mount Cook), and leads to Lake Tekapo, where the incandescent lightshow of aurora australis is revealed in the night sky. ●