



AHIPARA
LUXURY TRAVEL

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New Zealand Regions

Any analysis of this country's regions will be either academic or subjective. This one is subjective and open to constant improvement. Keeping abreast of everything wonderful and new which makes its appearance is impossible. It's a particularly enjoyable part of our job, but time - sadly - is not unlimited. Please also bear in mind this is not a guidebook.

Northland

This is the area north of Auckland. It can be characterised by beach life, yachting, diving, game fishing, a strong Maori presence, and the destinations of the Bay of Islands and 90-Mile Beach. If you want sun, sand and sea, this is where to go. For those after something more offbeat - the Kaipara Harbour (where we have access to a little cottage on a major peninsular estate), the Hokianga (the cradle of Maori) and the far north are all interesting.

Auckland

Often misunderstood, this city has grown to dwarf New Zealand's other cities. The reason, according to one eminent historian is lifestyle. I agree with him. This is not an easy city to understand for those who want to do it themselves. Our clients have had an excellent time. With the maritime playground - second to none - of the Hauraki Gulf and its marine life, vineyards and beaches - and on the other side black sand beaches and crashing surf near mountainous rainforest - there really is a lot to do. The West Coast has been home to a number of films, from The Piano, to Xena and Hercules. This is also the world's largest Polynesian city for those interested in South Pacific cultures. There are plenty of boutiques, restaurants, bars and cafes for those who have had an overdose of countryside.

Central North Island

This is a traditional tourism area which also includes some offbeat gems. The destinations of Rotorua (geothermal activity), Taupo (lake) and Waitomo (glow-worm caves) have enjoyed significant popularity for a long time. Unknown are remote East Cape and Taranaki, for those who wish to explore. The area includes mountain, bush (rainforest), geothermal activity, remote rivers and extensive coastline and has quite a number of activities which are not nearly as commercial as available elsewhere. This is where our Special Forces people like taking clients for remote adventures. Hawke's Bay is a growth area, not only for superb vineyards, but also for access to remote beauty and the art deco town of Napier. We are currently developing some options here which should be quite exciting.

Southern North Island

Wellington, apart from housing the country's politicians, is also the arts capital of New Zealand. A small, windy city perched on a number of ridges sloping down to the sea, it has many fans. A short drive up the West Coast is the pristine nature reserve of Kapiti Island, while up the East Coast

(wilder, more remote) are the vineyards of Martinborough and the rural expanse of the Wairarapa.

Top of the South Island

This is a unique area, comprising the beautiful Marlborough Sounds (fjords), the Blenheim vineyards, sunny and artistic Nelson and the beautiful Abel Tasman National Park. Still not overly commercialised, it is worth spending a few days here to soak up the atmosphere. Our favourites include an eco-cruise of the Marlborough Sounds, a private visit to offbeat artists in Nelson and kayaking and hiking in Abel Tasman.

Central South Island

This is the lovely mountainous, rugged scenery many people associate with New Zealand. Snow-capped peaks, the Canterbury Plains, and the rugged West Coast with its glaciers. Again not too developed and with superb natural beauty complemented by activities such as glacier hikes, helicopter adventures, private jet boat tours, horse rides and hikes.

Southern South Island

An area of contrasts. Home of "adventure capital of the world" Queenstown, which unfortunately not many travellers get beyond. Queenstown is a picturesque alpine village with a great buzz where you can find lots of young people, and lots of easily accessible commercial activities - bungy jumping, jetboating, rafting, and now also wonderful wine tours.

Most people take a trip to Milford Sound which is beautiful but tends to get rather crowded.

For those who want to go further or have the budget to do so - there is a lot of Fiordland which is remote and untouched and accessible by helicopter, Wanaka with its abundant sunshine, Invercargill which is developing its tourism in a sophisticated and low-volume manner, and Stewart Island for those who want to go as far south as possible. Not a place to miss, there are several ways to approach this area which can change it from adrenaline-fed backpacking to breathtaking and elegant beauty.