

Travel



GURU

By Paul Dugan

New Zealand is a land of overwhelming beauty and has much to offer our intrepid travellers, indeed there is so much to tell you about it could well be our travel article for the several issues of the Newsletter.

For the independent traveller visiting New Zealand there are a wealth of transportation opportunities available to access some of the less visited regions of the country. Car, campervan, motorcycle or bicycle: quality examples of all these modes of transport can be readily hired in Auckland, the main point of entry to New Zealand.

Increasingly, visitors are looking further afield than the traditional tourist routes and discovering the relatively unknown charms and natural beauty of New Zealand.

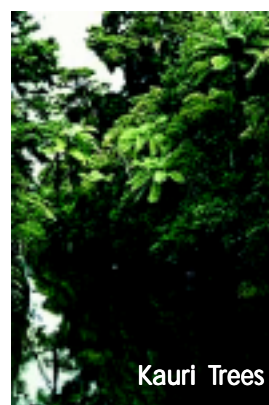
The Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) has been developed with this “explorer” spirit in mind. Veering away from the established tourist routes, the PCH takes in the eastern regions of the North Island starting in Auckland, winding through the beaches and bush of the The Coromandel, sweeping the coastline of the Bay of Plenty to the very eastern tip of the North Island before taking an southerly turn through Eastland, one of the most undiscovered regions in the country. From here the route winds its way through picturesque wine making country, the fruitbowl of New Zealand, Hawkes Bay and ends in the twin cities of Napier and Hastings.

Hiring a car, campervan or motorcycle in Auckland can be the best way to undertake this route giving you the independence to spend as much or as little time as you wish exploring the narrow winding back roads and scenic walking tracks along the way. Alternatively, pedal power is another way if you have a little more time and energy. Cyclists can normally undertake this route at all times of the year.



‘Little Toot’ on the Whangaparaoa Steam Railway

The greater Auckland region stretches from the Whangaparaoa Peninsula in the north to the Hunua Ranges in the south and covers a vast area of land with a diverse selection of natural attractions. Black iron-sand beaches, sub-tropical rain forest, volcanic hills and glorious golden sand beaches on remote islands all lie within its boundaries and create a diversity unique within such a relatively small area. For bush walks and hikes, the Waitakere Ranges offers some of the best possibilities and has an excellent information centre, Arataki, or “pathway of learning”. Cascades Kauri Park, within the Waitakere Ranges, has Auckland’s best Kauri forest.



Kauri Trees

Fans of the award winning film the Piano will be interested to visit the scenery of Auckland’s West Coast which featured in the film.

The islands of the Hauraki Gulf offer excellent bush walks, particularly Great Barrier and Kawau islands.

Tiritiri Matangi Island, due to its low levels of predatory species, offers an excellent opportunity to view many rare and endangered birds in their natural habitat. Leaving Auckland on State Highway 1, more early signs of the natural beauty of the route are encountered at the Hunua Ranges, a range of hills demarcating the southernmost boundary of the Auckland region. Leaving the southern motorway at Manurewa you’ll wind your way through pleasant, rolling farmland and around the sandy, pohutukawa lined coastline to the farming hamlet of Clevedon. From here follow the signs to Hunua and you’ll eventually wind your way to the Hunua Falls, a magical setting offering an ideal spot for a picnic, swim and a variety of bush walks. Here you will see examples of both native and introduced flora and variety of native birdlife.

Following the route south via the coastline of the Firth of Thames you’ll pass through what has become known as the Seabird Coast near Miranda. Here you can observe a variety of seabirds at New Zealand’s premier wading bird site. More than 39 wader species have been sighted including the New Zealand dotterel, the South Island pied oystercatcher, the black-billed gull and the wrybill. Be sure to allow some time for a relaxing soak in the thermal hot pools at Miranda too, before travelling on to see the rest of The Coromandel.

The charming, historical township of Thames is famed for its colourful past as a centre for the mining industry of the region in the 19th and early 20th centuries. From here it takes only moments to enter the tranquil settings for which The Coromandel is renowned.