

Our Favourite Places

Brendon:

OK... my favourite place in NZ? Too hard! There are too many wonderful options. So let me tell you about my perfect day.

It starts with a 1.5 hour trip north of Auckland to Goat Island for snorkelling in the marine reserve there. It's stunning... and so easy to find (just turn off towards Leigh once you hit Warkworth on State Highway 1 northbound). The fish there are huge and the water is crystal clear. But if snorkelling or diving is not your thing, then I'd go to Tawharanui beach, which is just around the corner. Again, this place is stunning. The beach has gentle 1-2 foot waves which are great for a body surf. After chilling out (or warming up) and soaking up the sun, I'm off back to Leigh for fish'n'chips. Better yet, I might swing by the Leigh Sawmill for a cold beer, a platter of yummy food and a chance to see one of the local live bands play on stage there. They sometimes bring in some superb headline acts, classic kiwi bands like 'Fat Freddys Drop', 'Sola Rosa' or 'Katchafire'



From there, I'm heading north again, probably to Managwhai Heads for the night (another 45 minutes away). There are several campgrounds located around the estuary there, but I'm there for the beach, another stunner, with a nice right hand break which can get up to 6 foot. This place is world renowned for kite surfing also.

And as I lay back in my Escape van and watch the stars, I know tomorrow is going to be fantastic also because I'm now just a couple of hours from Paihia and the Bay of Islands (some of the best fishing in the world).

Yep, all of this within a few hours of Auckland City. New Zealand really is the world in miniature!

Krispy:

This is a hard choice, so I'm going to do two.

The first is Kerosene Creek, just 25 kms from Rotorua on the highway to Taupo, you'll see it on the left.

About 1 km from the main trunk highway you will find a gravel car park, and in front of you a pathway down beside the river. This river is a hot water river, and about 200 metres down the path you will find a large open picnic area beside a waterhole and waterfall. This is a beautiful spot for a daytrip or picnic (though probably not the best place to camp as I don't remember any toilet facilities!), so jump in the waterhole and get a back massage from the waterfall, it's just brilliant! It's also in the middle of native bush so there are plenty of walks to do in the area.



My 2nd choice is Arthurs Pass National Park, right in the heart of Arthurs Pass. Here you will find 3 DOC sites all within 50 kms of each other. The Whites Rd site is probably my favourite as there's a river, lovely campsites, and a multitude of bushwalks. Also you are very likely to run into park rangers in this area who are friendly and very approachable, with lots of local knowledge. You will also find unlimited deadwood for your campfire, as it is in the heart of some of the nicest natural bush in the country. I hope you enjoy.



Zoe:

My favourite place would have to be Doubtless bay nestled along the lovely east coast in the winterless north. Beautiful colonial style villages set on bay upon bay of white sandy beaches and a real local kiwi hum to the place. It has all the attraction of the Bay of Islands without the tourist driven feel plus the best 'fish and chips' in NZ! It's a place not to miss!



Janine:

My favourite place is a small Central Otago town where I grew up. It has a population of only 5,500 (minus me of course!). When I tell people where I'm from, many have either never heard of it or have never been there.

The summers are always hot and Lake Dunstan is full of people out in their boats having a good time. You will most probably spot my brother out there towing people on their water-skis behind his boat; if you dare to ask him he just may take you out as well! The winters are the opposite of course, with the temperature some days reaching into the minus figures - awesome for the skiers amongst us. Queenstown is a 50 minute drive away and Wanaka is just 30 minutes, so you are never too far away from the ski fields in winter.



So where in Aotearoa am I talking about you ask? Well my favourite place is where most of my family still live : Cromwell!

You'll find it nestled between State Highways 6 and 8, so you'll pass right by if you're either coming down the West Coast or coming inland from Omarama on the Inland Scenic Route heading towards Queenstown. Drop in to the "Fruit Bowl of the South" and find out about its viticulture,

horticulture and gold mining history!

Roger:

When I was asked to write a piece about my favourite place in New Zealand, I was very tempted not to - to write, instead, about somewhere well-known, like the glorious golden beach of Kaiteriteri, or to write about the deep and dirty south Otago, like the wee coal mining village of Kaitangata that holds a special place in my heart. I want to keep my favourite place a secret; I want to keep it for myself and for it not to become another tourist attraction. But, I just can't do it! I have to tell you, I have to make sure that this Kiwi secret is shared and that everybody can experience this natural wonder. In my humble opinion, this tiny slice of New Zealand is, indeed, the most wonderful and beautiful place in the entire world.

I'm talking about Ohau Stream. You won't read much about it, or hear a lot about it, because it is a little diamond that New Zealanders like to keep to themselves. You'd drive past it completely oblivious to what you were missing. And I'm here to tell you all about it, and urge you to take 30 minutes of your life to experience one of nature's most breathtaking wonders...



26kms north of Kaikoura, there is a small gravel parking area just off of State Highway 1. There is a DOC sign telling you that you're at Ohau Stream. Walk along the 10 minute track, under the railway viaduct, following the damp gully of the stream. It is a haven of New Zealand flora and fauna, with Tui's singing overhead from the Tutu trees. When the path comes to an end - you'd be



forgiven for thinking you're in paradise. There is the most amazing waterfall in front of you, crashing down into a luscious rock pool. But the best part is... this is where the seals leave their pups to play whilst they spend the day fishing. It is, quite simply, incredible. The pups frolic and play in the water, they will come up to you if you're brave enough to climb onto the rocks, and will sway their heads from side to side, brushing their whiskers against your hand. Some of the locals are known for taking up a football, and watching the seals play with it in the water! You won't want to leave. You'll take hundreds of photos. You'll even be tempted to jump in the pool! And you'll drive away with the biggest smile on your face, and most probably, a tear in your eye. Ohau Stream is not only my favourite place in Aotearoa, it is my favourite place on this planet. It is Mother Nature's finest recipe. Enjoy!

Juan:

Raglan is my favourite place in NZ, because it's a great place to chill out and hang out with some of the most bohemian people in the country, people that enjoy a very unique lifestyle and have a strong link within many different sources of art and culture. There's live music every night, art galleries, weekend markets, and much more. Raglan is one of the few places on earth that roast their own coffee so there's another reason; to stop and get a taste of it. Raglan has a big harbour so keep your eyes relaxed when walking through the town. You want some more reasons? Okay, Raglan is home to one of the most prestigious left hand waves on the planet, with more than 700 metres to ride, on perfect days you don't need anything else. And on top of that it's one of the best places for kayaking, wakeboarding, skydiving, tramping, fishing and just really a good town to stop by.



Ellie:

I'm not really that stoked about having to write this as I'm not decisive at the best of times. I have a million favourite places for various reasons, be it the incredible scenery, the things to do and/or the epic memories, so I'm going to share a couple.

Firstly, I love the 'winterless north' – my family have been spending their summer holidays at a tiny beach campground 30mins from Kerikeri for as long as I can remember. There's absolutely nothing there aside from a motel, a campground and a caravan that sells fish'n'chips but there's always loads to do, from lazing about on the beach to climbing the hill to the Rainbow Warrior Memorial to diving, snorkelling, fishing or taking a boat trip out the Cavalli Islands. Bliss.

Secondly, I'm a real Auckland girl. People bag my home town out but it's awesome if you know where to go and what to do. If I'm spending time in the city I'm all over a trip on the ferry across to Devonport for lunch, cruising out to Piha or Karekare beach on our wild west coast for some beach time (the scenery here is out of control) and back out to St Heliers for an ice cream and dinner on the waterfront.



Lastly (I could go on forever), I've just spent a few years in Queenstown. No doubt you've heard of it and are intending to go down there and I can't recommend it enough. I'm big into jumping off and out of things and this is the place to do it, from planes to bridges to swinging through canyons, I've done it here and I'd do it again and again. The nightlife in Queenstown is legendary and the scenery, particularly on the road out to Glenorchy (go to Paradise if you can) is postcard perfect.

