

# New Zealand: Golf, Grandeur and Grapes

## The North Island

After arriving in Auckland, you'll connect for a short, scenic flight to the **Bay of Islands**. Here, toward the northern tip of the North Island in the Northland you'll find **Kauri Cliffs**, Golf Magazine's 63rd best course in the world and hedge fund financier Julian Robertson's first New Zealand development. Opened in 2000 and routed among 800 acres of strange fern forest, marshland and cliff tops, this is a fitting introduction to the Kiwi game. There are several forced carries and 200 hundred foot death drops to keep things interesting but Florida architect David Harman has crafted a completely playable ensemble with wide landing areas and generous greens. Tee times every half hour allow you to have the course to yourself which will serve you well on 14 tee where you'll need a moment to take in the scene of the Cavaili Islands and Matauri Bay. Back at the lodge, eleven cottages are on offer each containing two one-bedroom suites. The bedroom is large, the fireplace is hot and the 180° views over the golf course to the Pacific promise a sunrise you'll wake up to wait for.



Where Northland has its beaches and **Auckland** its great waterfront restaurants, **Lake Taupo** is the centerpiece of your next stop and quite possibly the most adventurous with active volcanoes and some of the world's most highly prized fly fishing. You'll find distinctly Kiwi accommodation at numerous local lodge and ranch properties, all of which leave you within striking distance of two of the country's most highly regarded layouts: **Wairakei International** and Mr. Robertson's second masterpiece – **Cape Kidnappers**.

**Wairakei** is the finest non-coastal course in the country. Opened in 1970 as New Zealand's first golf resort, then given a major makeover in the late 90s, it's a parkland layout requiring target-golf skills to negotiate strategic bunkering and tree-lined fairways. The par-5 14th hole previously held title as the country's longest at 602 yards but you'll remember it for the 150 foot pine tree in the middle of the fairway forcing your second shot left or right. Next you're bound for **Cape Kidnappers**, a Tom Doak creation unleashed on the world in 2004 immediately putting New Zealand on the must conquer list for every fearless player willing to test his true mettle. Ladies are welcome of course but nearby **Napier** and **Art Deco City** are far more forgiving than a track featuring the likes of "Pirate's Plank" – the 653 yd, par-5 fifteenth with cliff left, ravine right. It's all very simple on the Plank; short grass or Davy Jones' Locker. Most of the back nine plays atop these bizarre finger ridges with chasms in-between and 500

foot cliffs to the Pacific representing the most audacious piece of property ever turned into a golf course. The front nine plays through farmland for the most part but there is nary a cream puff among them. It's a challenge to be sure but with the recent opening of onsite luxury lodging at The Farm (24 suites and a four bedroom Owner's Cottage), Cape Kidnappers now offers comfort in equal measure.

Away from the battlefield there are ample opportunities to lick your wounds. The **Hawke's Bay Wine Country** is one of the country's three major winemaking regions, and New Zealand's premier destination for food, wine and lifestyle. Relax on golden sand beaches, swim with dolphins, visit the National Aquarium or tour the largest mainland gannet colony in the world. Nearby Napier is home to 55,000 Kiwis and one of the world's largest concentrations of Art Deco architecture. Leveled by an earthquake in 1931, the city's re-founding fathers built what looks to be a Jazz Age movie set but it is quite real and uniquely charming with excellent shopping and restaurants. Fifteen minutes south of **Napier** is prestigious **Mangapapa Lodge**. This 1885, colonial-style homestead with a wraparound veranda and 12 individually decorated suites was treated to a complete renovation in 2005. With more than 20 acres of lush, green, manicured gardens brimming with roses, established trees and orchards, it is one of the country's very finest small hotels.



Back in Lake Taupo, its time to go rainbow trout fishing after you check in to **Huka Lodge**. Hidden on the banks of the Waikato River just 300 meters upstream from the mighty Huka Falls, Huka Lodge was founded 70 years ago as a simple fishing lodge then in 1984 was converted into the country's first and most luxurious boutique hotel. Today the property lures those seeking the most extraordinary of retreats. Huka has just 20 guest rooms and suites; each set privately in native bush, each overlooking the swift flowing Waikato. The Owner's Cottage has recently been refurbished and offers four superbly appointed guest suites, living room, dining, kitchen and a den plus provision for staff. It is ideal for groups who prefer the private luxuries of an exclusive use property. Fly fishing is available on 23 nearby streams and rivers where the Lodge's fishing guides will introduce some of the finest Rainbow and Brown trout spots in existence. Wilderness areas are offered by helicopter and off-road vehicles. On Lake Taupo, boat fishing will explore the many isolated coves and inlets fringing the edges of the great lake.

## **The South Island**

New Zealand's South Island offers the nation's best mountain courses. On the east coast, less than an hour's drive inland from **Christchurch**, is **Terrace Downs**. Located in one of the most naturally beautiful places on earth – at the base of Mt Hutt overlooking the Rakaia Gorge – the resort offers an incomparable luxury leisure experience on 550 acres of secluded New Zealand High Country. The 7,046 yard, par 72, championship course features four tee positions for players of all abilities. Played against

the backdrop of the Southern Alps, you will need to keep an eye out for 11 lakes and 70 bunkers. The entire round is a picture book experience but the panoramas are poignantly interrupted by the diminutive 16th, a 3-par of only 143 yards from the tips, but whose tee box hangs on the edge of the gorge with the Rakaia River over 200 feet below. Beyond splendid golf, Terrance Downs also offers guided salmon and trout fishing. Guests can receive fishing tuition and equipment to enjoy a wide selection of spring creeks, mountain streams, lakes and snow fed rivers along with raft based trips and helicopter to access the more remote waters. The majestic Southern Alps of New Zealand also hold some of the world's finest big game animals available for free range hunting safaris plus hunts on exclusive private land. Superb accommodation is offered in one, two and three bedroom Villa Suites plus three and four bedroom Fairway Chalets. All feature spacious open plan lounges, dining areas with gas fires, fully equipped kitchens and balconies providing majestic views over the golf course of the Southern Alps.



Three hundred miles south west of **Christchurch**, about half way to a land many consider to be the eight wonder of the world, is **Millbrook Resort**. Situated on 500 acres of what was once a wheat farm, then a recovery center for soldiers injured in World War One, then a bootleggers hideout, the spot now offers one of New Zealand's top alpine golf courses and a highly regarded spa. Sir Bob Charles (1963 British Open champion at Royal Lytham & St. Annes) designed the perfect layout for a location blessed with the spectacular Remarkables mountain range – wide fairways, minimal trouble and numerous elevated tees from which to take in the scenery. Ample risk-reward opportunities invite numerous swings for shot-of-the-day. The Spa at Millbrook is a total health and wellness experience, with leading edge treatments designed for head to toe restoration. You'll encounter the latest therapies for skin detoxification, hydrotherapy, advanced skin care, personal grooming, massage and facial therapies.

Beyond the resort, the **Queenstown's** area is world-class hub for adventure tourism with a menu of thrills from skydiving, whitewater rafting, hang-gliding, and jet boating the spectacular Dart River. For lovers of fine wines nearby **Otago** is home to 75 wineries serving 177 vineyards. Pinot Noir from this region is widely recognized to be among the best in the world. You can visit over 200 'cellar door' operations under your own steam or with a wine tour. West of the resort, and deserving a full day of your attention, is stunning **Milford Sound**. Located in 3 million acres of the **Fiordland National Park** and reaching nearly 10 miles inland from the Tasman Sea, sheer rock faces rise more than 1,300 feet about the water on either side. In Maori legend, the fiords were created not by rivers of ice, but by Tu Te Raki Whanoa, a godly figure who came wielding a magical adze and uttering incantations. By all appearances, Tu Te had quite a swing.

How many reasons do you need to take the golf trip of two lifetimes? Here are six:

Our winter is their summer. (Palm Springs is fine but New Zealand is phenomenal.) Their golf is played among some of the most dramatic and diverse landscapes on earth. (Keeping your head down is not an option.) New Zealand is unique for its collection of boutique luxurious lodge-style hotels. (Think Four Seasons gets back to nature.) Their Pinot Noir is becoming as recognized as their Sauvignon Blanc. (Prepare your palate.) Fly fishing here is absolutely second to none. (The ladies will catch Art Deco City.) Their dollar exchanges favorably with our dollar. (Start packing!)

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