

# BIG FIVE<sup>®</sup>

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

*Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys*

## Destination Information Guide

# New Zealand



Photo courtesy of Peter Morath (peter.morath@xtra.co.nz)

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## Welcome to the World of Big Five!

*The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.*

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



<b>Auckland ~ Elevation: 20 feet    Latitude: 37 01S    Longitude: 174 48E</b>												
Average Temperature Years on Record: 21												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	68	68	66	61	57	54	52	53	55	58	61	64
Average Precipitation Years on Record: 138												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	2.8	3.4	3.1	3.8	4.5	5	5.2	4.4	3.7	3.7	3.2	3.1
<b>Queenstown ~ Elevation: 1167 feet    Latitude: 45 01S    Longitude: 168 44E</b>												
Average Temperature Years on Record: 32												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	60	60	57	51	44	40	38	42	46	50	54	58
Average Precipitation Years on Record: 30												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	3.2	2.9	3	2.9	2.6	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.6	3	2.5	2.4

## WEATHER

It is subtropical in the North and temperate in the South. The North has no extremes of heat or cold but winter can be cold in the South, with snow in the mountains. The eastern areas often experience drought conditions in summer; the West, particularly in the South Island, has more rain.

## TIME ZONE

New Zealand: GMT + 12 (GMT + 13 from the last Sunday in September to the last Sunday in April).

## PASSPORTS & VISAS

**Passports:** For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least **3** blank pages are necessary.

**Visas:** Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) to process required visas for our passengers. You can download the necessary forms from ZVS' website at:  
**<http://www.zvs.com/tourkits/tourkits.aspx>**. Please use account # **73015**, and follow directions to enter the visa section.

**Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:**

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

*Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.*

## AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities.

**Departure tax:** is included in the cost of the airfare.

## CUSTOMS INTO NEW ZEALAND

**Duty Free:** The following items may be imported into New Zealand by persons of 17 years of age and over without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco or a mixture of all three weighing no more than 250g; up to three bottles of spirits (each a maximum of 1125ml); goods to a total value of NZ\$700.

**Prohibited items:** Because of the importance of agriculture and horticulture to the New Zealand economy, certain animal products, fruit, plant material or foodstuffs that could contain plant or animal pests may not be allowed into the country. For further information, contact the nearest Embassy, High Commission or Consulate. The import of the following items is also prohibited: firearms and weapons (unless a special permit is obtained from the New Zealand police); ivory in any form; tortoise or turtle shell jewelry and ornaments; medicines using musk, rhinoceros or tiger derivatives; carvings or anything made from whalebone or bone from any other marine animals; cat skins or coats and certain drugs (diuretics, depressants, stimulants, heart drugs, tranquilizers, sleeping pills) unless covered by a doctor's prescription.

## U.S. CUSTOMS

Duty Free for passengers aged 18 years or older: 100 cigarettes and 25 cigars and 200 grams of tobacco, 1 opened bottle alcoholic beverage, perfume for personal use. Refer to consulate in regards to Agricultural items, currency, & gifts. Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Please remember that regulations frequently change. For more information, you can write the U.S. Customs Service at Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or go to the Customs & Border Protection webpage at [www.customs.gov](http://www.customs.gov).

## HEALTH

Anyone traveling internationally should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Also, discuss your general fitness level for participating in the activities related to your specific tour (i.e. snorkeling, hiking, nature walks, etc.). However, in highly developed areas of New Zealand, you

should observe health precautions similar to those that would apply while traveling in the United States.

**Yellow Fever:** Yellow fever is not required to enter New Zealand. Inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area **other than** the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting multiple countries, where one of the countries is known to have had yellow fever cases.

**Other risks:** There are no snakes or dangerous wild animals in New Zealand. Sand flies are prevalent in Fiordland, but these can be effectively countered with insect repellent. The only poisonous creature is the very rare katipo spider. Vaccinations against tuberculosis and hepatitis B are sometimes recommended

**Please note:** If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

**Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.** Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

## CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the Travel Handbook in your pre-departure materials.* See pre-departure information for general packing check list.

Lightweight cottons and linens are worn in the North Island most of the year and in summer in the South Island. Medium weights are worn during winter in the South Island. Rainwear is advisable throughout the year, and essential if visiting the South Island's rainforest areas.

## LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the Travel Handbook in your pre-departure materials.*

In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary with destination and type of planes used. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final itinerary.

## MONEY

**Currency:** New Zealand Dollar (NZ\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of NZ\$100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of NZ\$2 and 1, and 50, 20, and 10 cents.

**Currency exchange:** Exchange facilities are widely available throughout New Zealand. **Banking hours:** Mon-Fri 0900-1630. Some banks are open on Saturdays.

**Credit & debit cards:** American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services that might be available.

**Traveler's checks:** Can be exchanged at official rates at trading banks, large hotels and some shops. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in US Dollars, Pounds Sterling or New Zealand Dollars.

**Currency restrictions:** There are no restrictions on the import and export of foreign or local Currency.

## LANGUAGE

English is the common and everyday language, but other languages are also spoken, including Maori, which is New Zealand's second official language (spoken by the indigenous Maori people who constitute approximately 15% of the population).

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 64. Outgoing international code: 00. Most public phones take cards purchased from bookstalls; some also accept credit cards, but very few still accept coins. **Mobile telephone:** Extensive AMPs network operated by Telecom New Zealand. GSM 900 network operated by Vodafone New Zealand. Handsets can be bought or hired. There are also mobile telephone shops at Auckland and Christchurch airports.

**Internet:** There are Internet cafes in the city and smaller town central business districts. Travelers may access the Internet at many hotels.

## **ELECTRICITY**

230 volts AC, 50Hz. Most hotels provide 110-volt AC sockets (rated at 20 watts) for electric razors only.

## **FOOD & DRINK**

In all main areas, water is considered safe to drink. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Standards of hygiene in food and water preparation are very high. Generally speaking, use the same precautions in New Zealand that you would at home. Milk is pasteurized and meat and vegetables are considered safe to eat. Any change in routine can lead to stomach troubles. Food and waterborne diseases can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout Australia and the South Pacific and can contaminate food or water. New Zealand has a reputation as a leading producer of meat and dairy produce with lamb, beef and pork on most menus. Venison is also widely available. Locally produced vegetables, such as kumara (a natural sweet potato), are good. There is also a wide range of fish available including snapper, grouper and John Dory. Seasonal delicacies such as whitebait, oysters, crayfish, scallops and game birds are recommended. New Zealand is also establishing a reputation for French-type cheeses: Bleu de Bresse, Brie, Camembert and Montagne Bleu. New Zealand's traditional dessert is pavlova, a large round cake with a meringue base, topped with fruit and cream. Many picnic areas with barbecue facilities are provided at roadside sites. Restaurants are usually informal except for very exclusive ones. Waiter service is normal, but self-service and

fast-food chains are also available. Some restaurants invite the customer to 'BYO' (bring your own wine... not liquor).

New Zealand boasts world-class domestic wines and beers, some of which have won international awards. A wide range of domestic and imported wines, spirits and beers is available from hotel bars, 'liquor stores' and wine shops. Bars have counter service and public bars are very informal. Lounge bars and 'house bars' (for hotel guests only) are sometimes more formal and occasionally have table service. The minimum drinking age in a bar is 18. Bars and restaurants are generally open on Sunday

**SMOKING:** Please note that smoking is banned indoors and often outdoors in any public place much as it is in the US.

## **TIPPING**

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:  
**[www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide](http://www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide)**

## **SHOPPING**

Special purchases include distinctive jewelry made from New Zealand greenstone (a kind of jade) and from the beautiful translucent paua shell. Maori arts and crafts are reflected in a number of items such as the carved greenstone tiki (a unique Maori charm) and intricate woodcarvings often inlaid with paua shell. Other items of note include woolen goods, travel rugs, lambs wool rugs, leather and skin products.

**Shopping hours:** All shops and businesses are open Mon-Sat 0900-1700, as a minimum; there are local variations but many stores and most malls are also open Sun 1000-1300. In resorts, most shops are also open in the evenings.

**Social note:** Should a visitor be invited to a formal Maori occasion, the hongi (pressing of noses) is common. Casual dress is widely acceptable. New Zealanders are generally very relaxed and hospitable. Stiff formality is rarely appreciated and, after introductions, first names are generally used. Smoking is restricted where indicated. It is banned in pubs and restaurants.

## OVERVIEW TO NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand contains six of the seven climatic regions on the planet, boasts a series of unparalleled golden-sand beaches, protected marine parks to explore from on or beneath the surface, safe-but-active volcanic areas, pristine snow-capped Alps to ski and climb, prehistoric forests and unique flora and fauna. It does all this in one easily accessible package without thousands of miles to travel between each destination and it has an enviable reputation as one of the safest destinations in the world, lacking poisonous animals and boasting a low crime rate.

As New Zealand was separated from other land masses some 100 million years ago, many plant and animal species are unique to the country. This is particularly true in the case of birds, which attract bird-watching enthusiasts from all over the world. Owing to the lack of predators, many of the country's birds never fully developed wings and, hence, live on the ground. The best-known native bird is the kiwi, also the country's unofficial national symbol. Others include the kea and weka as well as the endangered kakapo, the world's largest parrot. The emu, originally from Australia, is also found here; New Zealand's own native equivalent, the moa, is now extinct. New Zealand is also home to the world's largest insect, the weta (a mouse-sized cricket), and the tuatara (a reptile whose lineage stretches back to the dinosaurs). Famous locations for bird watching include Taiaroa Head (near Dunedin), known for colonies of royal albatrosses and Stewart Island, where kiwis can be observed at night. Cape Kidnappers in Hawkes Bay is the largest gannet colony in the world, and is well worth a visit at low tide when it is possible to walk along the beach or take a tractor ride.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc. Barnes & Noble, Amazon and Longitude Books offer you a variety of excellent travel books.

### **NEW ZEALAND: A NATURAL HISTORY**

by **Tui De Roy, Mark Jones, Mark Jones**

This stunning book combines spectacular photography with natural history and personal experience to guide readers into "the land of the long white cloud." Second only to Hawaii in natural diversity, the New Zealand archipelago has borne centuries of environmental tumult and species destruction. At present, dedicated conservationists are working hard to revive shattered ecosystems and to restore endangered species. In a heartfelt tribute to those efforts, the authors chronicle the environmental successes and failures while revealing the islands' otherworldly organisms and plant life. All of the photographs were taken either in the wild or in conservation areas, and many reveal plants and creatures rarely before seen.

### **NEW ZEALAND STORIES**

by **Katherine Mansfield, Vincent O'Sullivan**

Katherine Mansfield is New Zealand's most celebrated writer, and one of the key figures in the history of the short story in English. Yet in this book

the stories set in her own country have been collected and published in the order in which she wrote them for the first time. The Mansfield who emerges from this fresh perspective is both familiar and unexpected. This collection confirms the detailed reality of her New Zealand, both its backblocks and its marginality, as well as the subtle family exchanges of the famous Wellington narratives. Reading these stories in sequence and as a group brings into focus the sharp political dimension of Mansfield's fiction as well as the emphases that fall so differently from those in her English and European stories. In this volume Mansfield is seen with new clarity as a colonial writer at the same time as she extends the boundaries of what modern short fiction could achieve.

### **ISLAND OF THE LOST: SHIPWRECKED AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD**

by **Joan Druett**

In the winter of 1864, five seamen aboard the schooner Grafton wreck on the remote and icy Auckland Island, 285 miles south of New Zealand. An isolated speck in the Southern Ocean, it is a godforsaken place, with winds howling at sixty miles an hour, rain three hundred days a year,

and an almost impenetrable coastal forest.

Under the leadership of Captain Thomas Musgrave, these men defy their slim chance of survival. With their bare hands they build a cabin and, incredibly, a forge, where they manufacture every single nail as well as most of their tools. Meanwhile, on the opposite end of the same island— twenty miles of impassable cliffs and chasms away— another ship wrecks during a horrible gale. Nineteen men struggle ashore. They succumb to utter anarchy, and only three survive, while all the Grafton men survive for nearly two years before finally building a vessel and setting off on one of the most courageous sea voyages ever. Award-winning maritime historian Joan Druett tells a gripping cautionary tale about leadership, endurance, human ingenuity, and the tenuous line between order and chaos.

### **THE BONE PEOPLE**

by **Keri Hulme**

Integrating both Maori myth and New Zealand reality, *The Bone People* became the most successful novel in New Zealand publishing history when it appeared in 1984. Set on the South Island beaches of New Zealand, a harsh environment, the novel chronicles the complicated relationships between three emotional outcasts of mixed European and Maori heritage. Kerewin Holmes is a painter and a loner, convinced that "to care for anything is to invite disaster." Her isolation is disrupted one day when a six-year-old mute boy, Simon, breaks into her house. The sole survivor of a mysterious shipwreck, Simon has been adopted by a widower Maori factory worker, Joe Gillayley, who is both tender and horribly brutal toward the boy. Through shifting points of view, the novel reveals each character's thoughts and feelings as they struggle with the desire to connect and the fear of attachment. Compared to the works of James Joyce in its use of indigenous language and portrayal of consciousness, *The Bone People* captures the soul of New Zealand as it continues to astonish and enrich readers around the world.

## COME ON SHORE AND WE WILL KILL AND EAT YOU ALL: A NEW ZEALAND STORY

by Christina Thompson

An extraordinary love story between a Maori man and an American woman, that inspires a graceful, revelatory search for understanding about the centuries-old collision of two wildly different cultures.

Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All is the story of the cultural collision between Westerners and the Maoris of New Zealand, told partly as a history of the complex and bloody period of contact between Europeans and the Maoris in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and partly as the story of Christina Thompson's marriage to a Maori man. As an American graduate student studying literature in Australia, Thompson traveled on vacation to New Zealand, where she met a Maori known as Seven. Their relationship was one of opposites: he was a tradesman, she an intellectual; he came from a background of rural poverty, she from one of middle-class privilege; he was a native, she descended directly from colonizers. Nevertheless, they shared a similar sense of adventure and a willingness to depart from the customs of their families and forge a life together on their own.

In this extraordinary book, which grows out of decades of research, Thompson explores the meaning of cross-cultural contact and the fascinating history of Europeans in the South Pacific, beginning with Abel Tasman's discovery of New Zealand in 1642 and James Cook's famous circumnavigations of 1769–79. Transporting us back and forth in time and around the world, from Australia to Hawaii to tribal New Zealand and finally to a house in New England that has ghosts of its own, This book brings to life a lush variety of characters and settings. Yet at its core, it is the story of two people who, in making a life and a family together, bridge the gap between two worlds.

## PARADISE: WHY I LIVE IN NEW ZEALAND

by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson

In the tradition of *Under the Tuscan Sun* and *A Year in Provence*, here is Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's ode to his personal paradise—his adopted home, New Zealand. After living in California, why did Masson settle—out of all the places on earth—in

such a faraway land? It turns out that while visiting a beautiful sandy beach just fifteen minutes from bustling Auckland, Masson and his family were utterly seduced by the exotic locale. There was little deliberation. This place, surrounded by lush forest on a bay dotted with volcanic islands, would be their new home.

Masson takes readers on a remarkable journey to another world, as he and his family slip into the paradise that is New Zealand. For anyone who has ever dreamed of finding utopia, Masson reveals a country where neighbors talk to one another and provide a sense of real community—rarely, outside of the big cities, locking their doors—and where politics are as mellow as the weather. New Zealand is also a land of spectacular scenery, made even more famous for being the shooting location for the *Lord of the Rings* films. The flora is plentiful. Mangroves, banana plants, papaya trees, and more than ten thousand species of ferns grow wild and freely. The fauna is benign. There are no snakes, tarantulas, or scorpions. Children can walk to school barefoot without a care—there is nothing to sting them, bite them, or give them a rash. In the blue waters near the lush coastline, dolphins and orcas abound.

While describing his love affair with the country and his affinity for its citizens, Masson reflects on the meaning of home, the importance of acting on intuition, and what happens when we lose our connection to the place we live in. Responding to an impulse, Masson reveals, he realized a dream. This is ideal for anyone planning a visit to this exquisite land. *Slipping into Paradise* is also a book for those who fantasize about dramatically changing their lives—and who imagine something better for themselves. Jeffrey Masson's message: New Zealand awaits.

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Katherine Mansfield is New Zealand's most celebrated writer and one of the key figures in the history of the short story in English. This is the first time the stories set in her own country have been brought together and published in the order in which she wrote them. The Mansfield that emerges from this fresh perspective is both familiar and unexpected. **SLIPPING INTO**