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A FOOD & WINE TOUR

Sampling some of the best that New Zealand has to offer

By **Sandra Ramani**

While most stories about New Zealand mention *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*, movies filmed against the country's stunning natural backdrops, those are not the only things that have helped boost New Zealand's international profile—or its tourism numbers. In fact, two of the country's most signature attractions are as precious to most of us as that ring was to Gollum: food and wine.

Thanks to fertile soil, agreeable climates and an isolation that has helped protect its ecosystem, the islands of New Zealand produce top-notch fruits and veggies, animals, dairy, wine, seafood, flowers and more—much of which is exported abroad to over 100 countries. In fact, New Zealand is one of only a few countries worldwide that exports over half its food production internationally.

But while this means you may be able to drink New Zealand's milk in China or Chardonnay in Texas, there is still plenty to savor and experience on its own lands. Start at these four standout Kiwi lodges, which celebrate the best local bounty in their food, wine and natural spa offerings.

◆ THE BOATSHED

Dreamy Waiheke Island, a short ferry ride from Auckland, is a former hippie hideaway that has evolved into a popular spot for weekend trips, wineries and second homes—though thanks to its green roots, there are regulations in place to keep it from growing too much, including building and environmental rules that only allow for small inns, no resorts.

As a result, tucked between the sandy coves and rolling farms and vineyards are idyllic small hotels like The Boatshed, which has five seaview suites and two larger cottages, most with private terraces and fireplaces. The main house is centered around a book-lined living room/terrace/open kitchen, where guests gather for the legendary breakfasts and dinners made with produce from the on-site terraced gardens and greenhouse. Explore the island with Ananda Tours (ananda.co.nz), which offer both pre-set and custom itineraries highlighting the local food scene (think oysters, chef-driven menus and homegrown olive oil), boutique wineries and breweries, working artist and gallery scene and ancient volcanic fields and coastal walking tracks. Back at The Boatshed, which only allows guests age 12 and over, enjoy an in-room spa treatment from a menu that includes nourishing mud wraps, coffee and sea kelp scrubs, and massages in targeted styles like trigger point therapy and myofascial release, using organic oils and butters. boatshed.co.nz



Left to right:
A view from Blanket Bay; salmon with
avocado & tomato tain from Otahuna
Lodge; Wharekauhau Country Estate

◆ WHAREKAUHAU COUNTRY ESTATE

Tucked on the edge of a 5,500-acre working sheep and cattle farm, which stretches from the beach through ancient forests and up into the hills, this lodge, on the southeastern coast of the North Island, a 90-minute drive from capital city Wellington, has made a name for itself with its relaxed brand of elegance; it was even Will and Kate's first stop on their trip to New Zealand in 2014. The 13 cottages have a breezy style, with plush couches, fireplaces, jars of homemade cookies and patios looking out over the acres of green.

Rates include gourmet breakfasts and dinners that start with cocktails with other hotel guests, followed by a four-course meal (served separately for each party). All meals pull ingredients from the grounds and surrounding region, such as honey from local bees, wild fennel from the coast and wine from the nearby Martinborough region. Sign up for a farm tour to explore the stunning grounds and, depending on the season, take in a sheep shearing and herding dog demonstration. The lovely spa, which includes a greenhouse-topped pool, offers excellent treatments using ingredients like 100 percent Manuka honey. wharekauhau.co.nz

◆ BLANKET BAY

This part of New Zealand—on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, near the cities of Queenstown and Wanaka—may be known for adrenaline-pumping activities like bungee jumping, heli-skiing, speed boating and mountain hiking, but minutes after checking into this lodge, backed by views of glittering Lake Wakatipu and the snow-capped Southern Alps, you'll want to do little more than exhale. The 12 rooms and suites feature rustic stone fireplaces and timber beams, plus modern perks like steam showers and complimentary mini-bars stocked with homemade treats.

Cuisine is key: rates include made-to-order breakfasts, pre- and post-dinner drinks, and five-course dinners; menus change nightly, but might feature regional ingredients like lamb from Hawkes Bay, crayfish from Milford Sound and locally crafted cheeses. Along with the extreme activities, Blanket Bay can arrange for more mellow pursuits like a day on the Wine & Arts Trail and on-site massages and facials with healing Manuka honey, regenerating Kiwifruit (great for UV-damaged skin), antioxidant Matcha green tea and pure essential oils. blanketbay.com

great places



◆ OTAHUNA LODGE

Built in 1895, the richly furnished Victorian mansion that is at the center of Otahuna Lodge was once New Zealand's largest private residence. The place is now owned and operated by an American expat couple, who have brought the elegant house, grounds, orchards and gardens back to life, and up to their current award-winning standards.

It's all in the details here, from the glass of wine you're offered at arrival and the complimentary communal pantry stocked with fresh-baked goodies and drinks, to the flexibility to enjoy the famous, five-course gourmet dinners anywhere in the mansion.

In addition to serving as a convenient base for enjoying horse-back riding, fly-fishing and vineyard hopping, the Lodge offers plenty of distractions on site, including tennis, swimming and tours of the gardens, ponds and adjacent woodland. Massages in the one-room spa are another popular add-on, as are cooking classes with noted Executive Chef Jimmy McIntyre, who draws from the on-site organic garden for his creative, flavor-packed recipes—many of which are featured in a new book about the Lodge (see sidebar.) www.otahuna.co.nz

For more ways to explore New Zealand, visit ospa.me/new-zealand-tour

A Taste of NZ



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In late 2015, Random House published *For the Love of a Place*, a book celebrating the history of Otahuna House that's filled with great stories and over 60 signature recipes—including this one for a perfect summertime ceviche.

Salmon Ceviche

Ingredients:

- 17.5 ounces of salmon fillet (skinless and pin bones removed). Cut into three or four strips down the length of the fillet, then slice each strip into small pieces. (see image, above)
- 2 tablespoons spring onions or red onions, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1 tablespoon pickled ginger, shredded, with a little juice
- 10 cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 jalapeno chili, seeded & finely diced (optional)
- 2 tablespoons roasted almonds and pine nuts
- Zest and juice of 1 lime, 1 lemon, and 1 orange
- 1 avocado, peeled and diced
- 3 tablespoons of roughly chopped Italian parsley, coriander, basil
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Gently fold all ingredients together and marinate for two hours, stirring occasionally. Serve with crusty bread.