



# GOING NORTH



Mike Yardley

**B**EING a South Islander, jaunting to Northland always feels like a glorified overseas holiday, bordering on a South Pacific mini-break. The weather and foliage is fabulously subtropical and the sun-kissed beaches are achingly gorgeous.

On my latest visit, I set my sights on some of those supremely scenic short drives from Whangarei. Striking out from Onerahi, the Whangarei Heads Rd offers such a dramatic scenic medley of saw-toothed mountains, beaches, walkways and craft galleries, strung along the peninsula's pencil-thin road, wrapped around the indented northern shoreline of the harbour.

Every princess-pretty bay, like Munro, McLeod, McGregors and McKenzie reveals new watery vistas framed by gnarled pohutukawa trees on the foreshore, backed by handsomely maintained holiday cottages and quirky homes.

McLeod Bay is a family favourite for its sheltered swimming, nestled beneath the mighty presence of Mount Manaia. The quaint white wooden St James Church, gracing the foreshore since 1858, completes the picture. McGregors Bay is another family crowd-pleaser, with clear waters for snorkelling



**PICTURED:** Whangarei Heads (main picture), Mount Manaia (above), seaside home around Whangarei Heads (above left), mural in honour of the Scottish settlers (above right).

and fabulous rock pools to keep the kids enthralled.

At the base of Mt Manaia, a plaque pays tribute to the district's early European settlers, Scottish Highlanders, who as you might have guessed, gave their names to many of the area's beaches. Towering above the harbour entrance, majestic Mt Manaia's jagged peak, crowned with toothy pinnacles, dominates the skyline. It's a thousand steps up on a



vigorous but manageable one hour climb through lush native forest to reach the summit. The Hen & Chicken Islands and Bream Head, that great fixture of the Auckland weather forecast, loomed large.

Short on time, I glanced by Bream Head Scenic Reserve's spoil of walking tracks, en-route to the end of drive, which climaxes at Ocean Beach, a powerful Pacific sweep of big surf, bounded by

## TOP TIP

**I zipped my way up north to Auckland with Jetstar. Score even sweeter deals with a Club Jetstar membership. [www.jetstar.com](http://www.jetstar.com) From Auckland, I picked up a trusty Avis rental car at the airport for my Northland roadie. [www.avis.co.nz](http://www.avis.co.nz)**

hulking sand dunes. After the sweet tranquillity of those inner harbour coves, Ocean Beach seems all the more raw and wild.

Tracking back to Whangarei, I sauntered south for a quick rendezvous with Marsden Point, before surrendering to the seaside splendour of Bream Bay's sprawling arc of white sandy beaches and laying over at pint-sized Waipu Cove. Steeped in Scottish heritage, the Waipu Museum showcases the great migration of the town's original 940 settlers via Nova Scotia.

I stayed at the beautifully landscaped Waipu Cove Resort, verdantly ablaze in subtropical gardens through Booking.com. With nearly 6000 New Zealand accommodation options listed, the diverse array of options spans hotels, apartments, holiday homes and campsites. Whether on the website or via the app, Booking.com is super easy to navigate with incredible deals. [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

## 4 HOT DEALS

### Canada

The Globus Grand Western Canada Vacation tour is a 13-day adventure, now priced from just \$4339 per person, twin share, if booked by March 31. Experience Canada's most scenic areas on this Canadian Rockies tour. Depart Vancouver on select dates between June to September. Visit [www.globustours.co.nz](http://www.globustours.co.nz), phone 0800 000 883 or see your travel agent.

### Caribbean

Cruise the Western Caribbean for seven nights on a round trip from Fort Lauderdale, aboard Celebrity Edge, priced from \$2189 per person, twin share, saving \$100 per person. Fare includes seven nights on board with main meals and entertainment. Plus receive US\$300 onboard credit. Highlights include Fort Lauderdale, Key West, Costa Maya, Cozumel and Grand Cayman. Cruise departs March 31, 2019. Sales until April 4. [helloworld.co.nz](http://helloworld.co.nz) or 0800 80 80 40.

### Melbourne Cup

Flight Centre has Melbourne Cup holidays from \$1049 ex Auckland or Wellington, per person, quad share. Includes return airfares, three nights' accommodation and Lawn Stand Reserved Grandstand Seating at Melbourne Cup. Valid for sales until March 31. Travel November 5. [www.flightcentre.co.nz](http://www.flightcentre.co.nz), 0800 427 555.

### Cuba

House of Travel has a 12-day Cuba package starting from \$3565 per person, share twin. This includes 11 nights' accommodation, some meals, airport transfers, transportation and activities. Travel is daily until October 31. Valid for sale until August 31, unless sold out prior. International flights additional. Visit [www.houseoftravel.co.nz](http://www.houseoftravel.co.nz), phone 0800 713 715 or call in to your nearest House of Travel store.

## Delights of Tutukaka Coast

Tracking back to Whangarei, I headed north on the Twin Coast Discovery Highway for the Tutukaka Coast.

Arguably the most famed of Whangarei's short drives, the two hour-long glorious loop road roams past succulent orchards, historic drystone walls, undulating farmland and formidable rock walls, before kissing the Pacific Ocean.

The Tutukaka Coast's necklace of seaside villages revel in their seclusion, proud little communities heaving with creative types' out-of-the-way restaurants showered in global accolades.

Admiring the golden view of the pristine Ngunguru Sandspit was a highlight en-route to the

Tutukaka Marina Village, which was heaving with excited hordes of tourists gearing up to set off to the Poor Knights Marine Reserve.

Heading north towards Matapouri, I made my way to the Tutukaka Forest Conservation Park, home to Tane Moana. Moana may not enjoy the rock-star billing of his big brother, Tane Mahuta, but is a treasure, a survivor — the largest kauri tree on Northland's East Coast.

Reaching nearly 30 metres in height with a stunning crown, and boasting a circumference of 11 metres, Tane Moana is believed to be about 170 years old. Moana will make you work for the pleasure



**Whale Bay, and Tane Moana (right).**

of an audience. It's a four hour return walk through tracts of native bush, thick with bird life.

Just north of Matapouri Bay



is the crescent-shaped showstopper of Whale Bay. Thickly fringed in native forest, ablaze in the crimson flowers of

pohutukawa, off-set by custard-coloured sand and translucent blue water, it is a celestial pocket of coastal splendour.