

ADVENTURES IN AUCKLAND

From scenic hikes and award-winning wines to adrenaline-filled action, you can sample the best of New Zealand in the City of Sails

WORDS: KARRYN MILLER

Atop 192-metre Sky Tower, it's easy to see why New Zealand is known as Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud

Auckland's population of 1.3 million is only a fraction of other metropolises'. It is its size that makes the City of Sails attractive, small enough that you can still smell the salty ocean breeze rather than city smog but large enough to have all the conveniences of a modern city. The urban space also offers a sampling of the best of New Zealand; you won't need to travel far for adrenaline-pumping adventures or for wine trails and scenic hikes in the region's islands. And there's no better time to visit than 2011 as the city gears up for The Rugby World Cup in September and October.

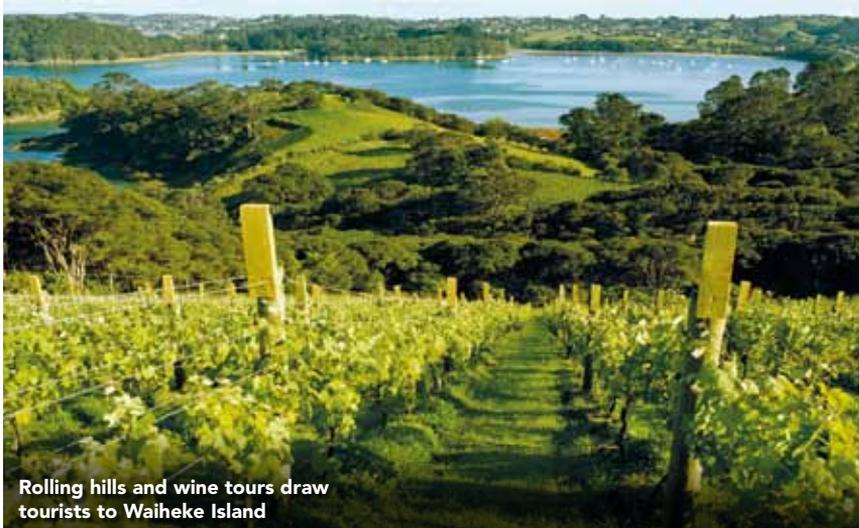
VIEW WITH A THRILL

"Base jumping without a parachute" is how some describe Auckland's SkyJump (www.skyjump.co.nz). Strapped to a cable hardly half an inch in diameter, thrill-seekers hurl themselves off the 192-metre high plank jutting out of the upper rung of the Sky Tower, the city's tallest and most recognisable landmark. After being dropped a few metres down for a photo opportunity, it's an 11-second plummet to a red X mark on the pavement below. Compared to the mental agony at the top, the actual jump is easy. Just keep telling yourself that, anyway.

HOT ROCKS

One of the most popular attractions at Auckland War Memorial Museum is the simulated eruption of Rangitoto, the volcano jutting ominously out of the harbour. Visitors sit in a makeshift house as they are shaken about and watch meekly as a hail of boulders, ash and lava decimate New Zealand's largest city. Scientists say the mountain, a mere 8km from Auckland's Central Business District (CBD), is unlikely to erupt again but its explosive past is still evident. Scoria rocks feature prominently along the one-hour hike to the summit, and eerie lava caves dip into the

DESTINATION GUIDE



Rolling hills and wine tours draw tourists to Waiheke Island

landscape is dense with native bushes such as the country's largest forest of *pohutukawa*, New Zealand's Christmas tree. But the main attraction is the summit where hikers are rewarded with a 360-degree view of the city and magnificent Hauraki Gulf islands. Be sure to pack water, snacks, and sunscreen as there are no shops on Rangitoto. Fullers (www.fullers.co.nz) runs 3-4 ferries to and from Rangitoto Island per day.

JET AWAY

"It's basically a massive jet ski," the captain says about his Ferrari-red craft that whips passengers around Auckland's harbour. Jet boats were developed by and for adrenaline-seeking New Zealanders, and outings on them are among the most popular activities in tourism hotspots like Queenstown and Rotorua. Since the introduction of Auckland Adventure Jet (www.aucklandadventurejet.co.nz)



in late 2010, those in the country's biggest city have also been able to give it a go. Passengers are fitted with eyewear, ponchos and life jackets; they are whisked out to sea to experience gut-wrenching spins and nose-dive stops. Be sure to bring a spare change of clothes.

HIP HARBOUR

Auckland's waterfront Viaduct Harbour area, just steps from the CBD and with dozens of bars and restaurants, is the

go-to spot for a fancy night out. At one end of the lively strip is The Foodstore (<http://thefoodstore.tv>), the area's most recent addition. The restaurant offers a "live food entertainment experience" with an open kitchen and a live camera feed of your meal being prepared. Try the spectacular goat cheese gnocchi with cherry tomato, basil, rocket and pistachio, and enjoy the views of the marina.

WINE COUNTRY

Waiheke Island may only be a 40-minute ferry ride from Auckland but it feels more like southern Italy than the nearby City of Sails. A leisurely drive around the island reveals rolling hills rich with olive groves and expansive vineyards, producing award-winning wines and oils. If you're on a tight schedule, Fullers offers afternoon wine tours to three of the island's top producers. If you have a bit more time, visit Passage Rock Wines (www.passagerockwines.co.nz) on Waiheke's eastern coast for wood-fired pizzas that taste like they are straight from Naples, and some of the best syrah the New World has to offer. ☑

WHERE TO STAY

■ Budget

Jucy Hotel

www.jucyhotel.com

Jucy provides clean and colourful accommodation for budget-conscious travelers – think bright purple bedspreads and green walls. Rooms have either private or shared bathroom facilities.



■ Medium

The Quadrant

www.thequadrant.com

Simple and stylish, the 150-room Quadrant Hotel is both a modern and affordable option in the heart of the city.

■ Luxe

Hotel DeBrett

www.hoteldebrett.com

This boutique hotel oozes style with 25 unique rooms decorated in an eclectic mix of 1950s decor with a modern Kiwi touch, and is ideally located on the city's hippest shopping strip.

Airline	Depart Changi	Arrive Auckland	Frequency
Singapore Airlines	2115	1205 (Next day)	Daily
	Depart Auckland	Arrive Changi	
	1335	1900	
Jetstar	Depart Changi	Arrive Auckland	Frequency
	1950	1055 (Next day)	Daily
	Depart Auckland	Arrive Changi	
	1225	1800	