

Land of the
**LONG WHITE
CLOUD**

Untamed landscapes, exhilarating outdoor adventures and immersive cultural experiences await on a New Zealand cruise, writes **Lauren Jarvis**





PREVIOUS PAGE Fiordland National Park
THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Maori dance; Napier; Tauranga Marina
at dawn; a seal basks in the sun

Cruising around New Zealand is the perfect way to experience the spectacularly diverse attractions of this wonderfully wild Antipodean country.

With more than 14,485km of coastline, and epic excursions around its North and South Islands – plus the chance to explore smaller isles such as Stewart Island and the sub-Antarctic Islands for a remote sense of adventure – it’s little wonder that New Zealand is a favourite destination for adventurous cruise travellers.

Aotearoa – or Land of the Long White Cloud – is the indigenous name for New Zealand, referring to the cloud formations that guided early Polynesian travellers to the country’s North Island.

Board a ship in Australia or join a cruise from Auckland to follow in the wake of these intrepid adventurers on your own voyage of discovery.

ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

According to the country’s indigenous people, the Maori, the first explorer to reach New Zealand was Kupe, who sailed his canoe from Polynesia to the North Island, using the stars and

Who SAILS THERE?

Cruises to suit all styles and budgets visit New Zealand, with lines including Carnival, Celebrity, Cunard, Disney, Heritage Cruises, Lindblad Expeditions, P&O, Ponant, Princess, Regent, Royal Caribbean International, Scenic, Seabourn, Silversea and Viking.

Most ships arrive between October and April, departing from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane in Australia. Popular ports of call include Auckland, Napier, Wellington, Picton, Christchurch, Dunedin and Fiordland National Park.

Expedition ships stop in New Zealand’s South Island en route to Antarctica, with some visiting smaller ports including Kaikoura and Stewart Island.

ocean currents to navigate. More people followed, bringing with them traditions that became uniquely Maori, including the powerful ceremonial war dance, the *haka*; the *waka* canoe and the *hangi*, where food is cooked by hot stones buried underground.

The English navigator Captain James Cook first sighted New Zealand in 1769, followed by whalers, sealers and missionaries, who brought guns and diseases that sadly ravaged the Maori population. In 1840 the British negotiated an agreement with Maori chiefs and the country became a British colony under the Treaty of Waitangi.

NORTHERN STARS

To experience Maori culture, watch cultural performances at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds in the Bay of Islands, a popular cruise stop on North Island’s northeast coast.

A little further south, New Zealand’s largest city, Auckland, is the country’s main cruise hub. From here you can take a ferry to the volcanic island of Rangitoto, wander the elegant halls of Auckland Art Gallery, sky jump from Sky Tower or join The Hotel Britomart’s Nourishing Nature tour to learn about

regeneration and biodiversity at Velskov, a native forest farm.

Velskov’s founder, Mamakan Oustrup Laureijs, says, “There’s a profound sense of renewal that comes with immersing yourself in the land. One of the most meaningful ways to do this is through planting a native tree: a ritual that leaves you with a lasting bond to the New Zealand landscape.”

From the port of Tauranga, head inland to take in the geothermal wonders of Rotorua, with its natural hot springs and mud pools, or soak up some rays on Mount Maunganui’s golden beach.

Jessica Easton, director of Kitchen Takeover, which hosts pop-up culinary feasts around New Zealand, says, “Maunganui offers a walk to the top of an ancient volcano, providing 360-degree views and the chance to spot seals, dolphins and orcas. Alternatively, venture to the equally stunning but underrated Papamoa Hills to take in the view of Maunganui and learn about the region’s Maori history.”

Another destination rich in Maori culture, the east coast city of Gisborne is the first in the world to see the sun rise each day and a great spot for

“Take in the geothermal wonders of Rotorua, with its natural hot springs and mud pools, or soak up some rays”



a winery tour or a surfing lesson on one of the region’s beautiful beaches.

In Napier, take a spin in a vintage car to see the elegant buildings of New Zealand’s ‘Art Deco capital,’ or have lunch overlooking the vines in Hawke’s Bay, one of the country’s leading wine regions. And to the south, Wellington, New Zealand’s compact capital city,

has fantastic dining, shopping and museums, including the interactive Te Papa, which brings the stories of the nation’s land and people to life.

SOUTHERN WONDERS

A playground for penguins, dolphins and seals, Marlborough Sounds is the South Island’s gateway for cruise ships, which stop at the pretty town of Picton with its galleries and boutiques. Blenheim’s wineries are nearby.

Some expedition vessels stop at Kaikoura to experience the region’s marine life, including orcas, while further south lies the French-inspired centre of Akaroa, where you can take a boat tour to see the world’s smallest and rarest dolphin species, Hector’s dolphin. From here it’s a short ▶

Previous page: Fiordland National Park - Jan Chica/Adobe Stock. This page: dance - Chameleons/Ever/Shutterstock; colourful houses - Boylso/Shutterstock; Tauranga Marina - Brian Scamlebury/Adobe Stock; seal - atosan/Adobe Stock



FROM FAR LEFT Geothermal pools in Rotorua; The Hotel Britomart's Nourishing Nature tour

hop to the ever-evolving city of Christchurch, which has been revived after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

Amiki Tours offers walking excursions that combine dining and indigenous culture in the city known to the Maori as Otautahi. Amiki's chief of visitor experiences, Riwai Grace, says, "Spend a day meandering around our city, taking in the beauty, tasting local produce and soaking up the relaxed pace of my hometown."

"My Maori and European heritage is woven through the rebuild and there is plenty to see. On the banks of the river, chefs design seasonal menus paired with local wine and beer, their restaurants nestled in restored and new buildings that shimmer against the water."

The port city of Dunedin on the southeast coast of South Island is a New Zealand nugget, offering a glimpse into the country's Gold Rush past with its grand historic homes. Birders, meanwhile, can visit the world's only royal albatross breeding colony at nearby Taiaroa Head. To the southwest, Fiordland National Park's dramatic cliffs rise from the ocean at Milford Sound and Doubtful Sound, as silver waterfalls plunge into the deep, dwarfing the tour boats below.

Geothermal pools - 99-foto/Shutterstock; diners - The Hotel Britomart

Ability Adventures specialises in inclusive, accessible tourism and experiences in New Zealand. Its occupational therapist, Sandie Grant, says, "The west coast is a fantastic area to explore, with a slow pace and the super can-do attitude of the locals."

"It offers a glimpse of what New Zealand might have looked like before the arrival of humans around 1,000 years ago."

Get on board

Ponant's nine-night New Zealand's North and South Islands by Sea with Smithsonian Journeys cruise aboard *Le Jacques-Cartier*, from Lyttelton to Auckland via Dunedin, Dusky, Doubtful and Milford Sounds, Picton, Napier and Whakatane, departs on 7 January 2025, from £6,278. uk.ponant.com

Heritage Expeditions' 13-night New Zealand Coastal Odyssey cruise aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, from Queenstown to Auckland via Fiordland, Stewart Island, Dunedin, Akaroa, Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, Napier and Tauranga, departs on 28 February 2025, from £5,365. heritage-expeditions.com

Why
YOU SHOULD GO

1 FOR THE WILDLIFE
From dolphins to orcas and unique native birds such as the kiwi and kakapo, New Zealand offers exciting animal encounters.

2 TO SAMPLE THE REGIONAL WINE
New Zealand makes world-class wine, so head to the wineries of Marlborough or Hawke's Bay for a tasting and lunch overlooking the vines.

3 FOR A THRILLING ADVENTURE
Whether it's a jet boat ride, bungee jump or heli-hike across a glacier, New Zealand is the perfect place to experience adrenaline-pumping escapades.

4 TO SOAK UP SOME CULTURE
Experience the Maori way of life through authentic tours, art, restaurants and attractions featuring song and dance that honour Aotearoa's indigenous heritage.

If you've cruised around New Zealand and want to share your story with *World of Cruising* readers, email hello@worldofcruising.co.uk