



The Blanket Bay property, located just outside Glenorchy. Opposite: The serene beauty of Lake Wanaka.



Editor-at-large **Ignacio Maza** uncovers off-season thrills while exploring **New Zealand's** most fascinating landscapes.

DUKE SOUTH



I recently explored *Aotearoa* (New Zealand's Māori name) with one mission in mind: to discover the many places I missed during my last visit. I desired fresh vistas, new adventures, and special places to stay. Rather than visiting during the country's popular summer season (North America's winter), I decided to travel in April, when it's quieter and fall colors are on full display.

The South Island, where I spent the majority of my time, is nature's wonderland. Imagine an island roughly the size of Illinois, with fjords, sand dunes, vineyards, turquoise lakes, golden beaches, dry valleys, rainforests, and snow-capped peaks soaring 12,000 feet into the sky. Couple this natural diversity with a unique history, a rich Māori heritage, friendly residents, and endemic flora and fauna (think: flightless birds), and you'll begin to appreciate what makes the South Island so special.

I'm sharing the memorable places, accommodations, and experiences well worth adding to your travel wish list. Wherever you go, expect genuine Kiwi hospitality, fine dining, and heartfelt service. My hope is that one of these places inspires you to visit the South Island. Nature at its best. Pure New Zealand.



NELSON & PIHOPA RETREAT

As the gateway to three national parks and also a hub for artists, fine dining, and exceptional wine, the easy-living Nelson is the country's sunshine capital. The jewel in the crown: Abel Tasman National Park. This coastal nature reserve is New Zealand's smallest national park and features sandy beaches, lush forests, clear ocean waters, and unique rock formations. I enjoyed an all-day sail, kayak, and hike adventure, which gives you an overview of this coveted corner of the South Island.

Stay at **Pihopa Retreat**, Nelson's only five-star resort built on the grounds of a former bishop's residence. Owners Sarah and Sam Mellor have transformed the historic property into a hideaway featuring six well-appointed suites and manicured gardens, plus a swimming pool, gym, and spa. Don't miss breakfast in the former church—a surprising and savory treat!

Opposite: Milford Sound. From top: Wharariki Beach, the northernmost point of the South Island; Pihopa Retreat in Nelson.



FRANZ JOSEF & TE WAONU I

The South Island's west coast is home to two of New Zealand's most awe-inspiring natural wonders: The Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. Named after the former Austrian emperor, the Franz Josef Glacier once stretched to the Tasman Sea. Today, the glacier is best seen from the air. I flew over the icefield in a helicopter, learning about crevasses and glacial flour from Jay, my expert pilot. Landing next to a turquoise alpine lake and seeing the ice up close left me literally breathless. My first choice of resorts in the town of Franz Josef is **Te Waonui Forest Retreat**, a comfortable, eco-designed property surrounded by preserved native rainforest. A must: Visit the nearby West Coast Wildlife Center and see elusive kiwi in captivity.

From left: The Franz Josef Glacier; the eco-designed Te Waonui Forest Retreat. Opposite: Minaret Station, which is set on a 50,000-acre working farm.

LAKE WANAKA & MINARET STATION

Can one lodge put a destination on the global map? It can when it's **Minaret Station**, New Zealand's premier mountain resort. Located high above Lake Wānaka and accessible only by helicopter, the lodge—the dream of the late Sir Tim Wallis, New Zealand's preeminent helicopter pilot and estate founder—is set in a wide valley within a 50,000-acre working farm. Arriving at Minaret Station felt like a sequence in a James Bond film. First, a helicopter flight to a mountaintop for glorious views of Lake Wānaka. Then, you're whisked away to a shepherd's hut for a delicious lunch prepared on the spot, followed by a scenic hike or flight to the lodge. Minaret Station is comprised of just four large chalets with high country hospitality, splendid views, and the best heli-experiences you can dream of.





MILFORD SOUND & FIORDLAND LODGE

New Zealand's top attraction is Milford Sound, a spectacular waterway of towering peaks, indigo waters, and countless waterfalls. To fully appreciate Milford and uncover the magic of nature at its most magnificent, drive from Te Anau and stop at Mirror Lakes, Knobs Flat, and the rivers found along the way. A cruise through the sound is the quintessential New Zealand experience and sure to impress, regardless of the weather. Stay at **Fiordland Lodge**, a perfectly positioned regional gateway on a rise overlooking Lake Te Anau and the mountains beyond. The lodge, made of massive wooden pillars, is family managed with oversized guest rooms in the main building and two log cabins. Accommodations feature fireplaces, terraces, and unforgettable sunset views.



AHURIRI RIVER VALLEY & THE LINDIS

The Ahuriri River Valley is a world-class hotspot for trout fishing. It's also a beautiful, rugged landscape. This remote glacial valley of tussock grass, flanked by two mountain ranges, has vast sheep stations and a conservation park. Blending seamlessly into this landscape is **The Lindis**. Opened in 2018, the lodge quickly became famous for its unique, ultramodern architecture that's reminiscent of a manta ray floating over the valley. The wood panel, bluestone, and sweeping glass design pays homage to its surrounding environment. Unwind in a large suite in the main lodge, or in a mirrored, free-standing pod. In addition to fishing, guests enjoy mountain biking, horse trekking, picnics, special heli adventures, and beautiful hikes on property. Don't miss the night skies—mother nature's greatest show on earth!

From top: An aerial view of Fiordland Lodge; The Lindis and its sweeping glass architecture. Opposite: Blanket Bay, overlooking Lake Wakatipu.

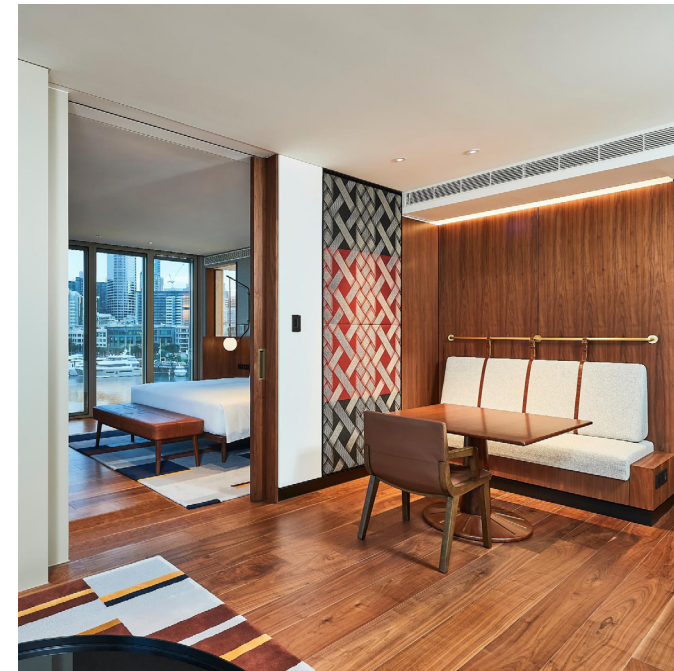
GLENORCHY & BLANKET BAY

Time stands still at **Blanket Bay**. This classic luxury lodge of schist rock and reclaimed hardwood on the shores of Lake Wakatipu is a short drive from the town of Glenorchy. Celebrating 25 years since opening, Blanket Bay is a member of Relais & Chateaux. Guests enjoy cozy fireplaces, dramatic mountain views, gourmet dining, and spa services. The vision of owner Tom Tusher, the former president of Levi Strauss, the resort is an alpine style, 19th-century lodge with 21st century amenities. Unwind in an oversized guestroom in the main lodge, a free-standing chalet, or the four-bedroom villa high above the estate. During your visit, you'll experience many adventures, from heli-sightseeing and fly fishing to the ultimate thrill: jet boating on the Dart River at up to 60 miles per hour.



QUEENSTOWN & AZUR LODGE

This undisputed adventure capital offers stunning views of Lake Wakatipu and surrounding mountains, plus endless outdoor pursuits. The city that invented bungee jumping and perfected jet boats provides every active experience imaginable, from hiking, biking, rafting, and winter sports, to wilder activities like paragliding, skydiving, and canyoning. At night, Queenstown buzzes with fine dining, nightclubs, and events throughout the year. Stay at **Azur Lodge**, nine private villas offering seclusion and dreamy views of the lake and The Remarkables mountain range. This hilltop Shangri-La, a haven of tranquility, is just a five-minute drive to central Queenstown. Relax in the spacious, comfortable, open-plan layout with terraces. Don't miss: Soaking in a villa bathtub set next to a large bay window with unobstructed vistas.



AUCKLAND & PARK HYATT

On your way to and from the South Island, spend a few days in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. Discover Māori masterpieces at Auckland Museum, take a ferry to Waiheke Island vineyards, explore the city's Volcanic Field, visit the black-sand beaches of Karekare and Piha, and wander around the trendy Ponsonby neighborhood. Stay at **Park Hyatt Auckland**, which overlooks Waitemata yacht harbor and offers sea and city views from most guest rooms. Considered the finest hotel in the city, it has ample guest rooms and suites. You'll access extensive facilities, including a full-service spa, a 75-foot infinity swimming pool and wet area, indigenous artwork, and four dining spaces, including Onemata, my favorite restaurant in town. 🍷

➔ **Pure New Zealand.** Enter **OFFER M27475** on the website found on the back cover for your next awe-inspiring escape, or call or email us directly for more wanderlust.

Opposite: Azur Lodge, which faces Cecil Peak. Top from left: Harbour Suite at Park Hyatt Auckland; the modern Auckland skyline.

