

# A GUIDE TO TOURING NEW ZEALAND with



**BEST ADVICE - BEST TOURS - BEST BIKES**

# NEW ZEALAND

Land of the long white cloud

You might have read about it. You might have been told of the beauty of it. You might have seen images of the breathtaking scenery and superb biking roads all over it! Whatever it is that sparked your interest in New Zealand, here's your indispensable guide to riding some of the best tarmac and most beautiful landscapes on earth...!



# BASIC GEOGRAPHY

New Zealand is for the greater part made up of two large islands – there's the North and South Island but many smaller ones are dotted around both and further afield. It stretches some 1,600km (1,000 miles) from north to south. With a landmass greater than that of the United Kingdom but only 4 million or so inhabitants, there's a lot of wide open space!

## NORTH

The North Island is generally regarded as the less scenic of the two. That would seem to indicate that it's not worth seeing but that's certainly not the case. The North Island has stunning coastlines, huge mountains and most of the thermal activity. With warmer weather than the South Island it has a more tropical feel in the north. Much of the Lord of The Rings filming took place here and that was renowned for its spectacular landscapes.

Auckland is at the northern end of the island and this is where the bike rental depots operate. Wellington (NZ's capital) is at the very south end of the island and the ferry terminal is there to take you to the South Island.

## SOUTH

The South Island is incredibly beautiful with snow capped mountains intersected by several amazing mountain passes. There are wonderful beaches and coastlines and the incredible steep sided fjords of the south west. Queenstown in the mountains is the extreme sport activity centre of NZ but you don't have to jump off bridges to have a wonderful time here!

It is cooler than the North Island especially at altitude but there's a wide variety of environments due to the mountain range running down the middle. Christchurch on the east coast is renowned for its 'English' feel, Gothic cathedrals and beautiful gardens and is the major city of the island. This is where the bike rental depots are located.





# THE WEATHER AND BEST TIME TO VISIT

In simple terms Spring through to Autumn is the best time to visit. Peak season is mid December to early February and this is when the school holidays occur and so booking just outside these times makes accommodation easier to find.

Spring and Autumn can be lovely as the lush greenness in Spring and beautiful colours of Autumn combined with the quieter holiday season often make it worth taking a chance with the weather.

New Zealand has a changeable, maritime climate. There is no large landmass in the way to block the prevailing west-to-east breezes bringing systems off the Tasman Sea and so the weather can be unpredictable at times and it can change rather quickly.

The Southern Alps form a natural barrier for the moisture-laden winds on the South Island and hence it rains more on the west coast while the east can be remarkably dry.

On the North Island the mountains are less formidable and rainfall is somewhat more evenly distributed, but the North Island is also a few degrees warmer than its southerly cousin.

The warmer months from November to April are best for outdoor pursuits, including motorcycling. Summer also brings more activities such as food and wine festivals, sports events and concerts.

Some might say that it rains a lot in New Zealand but this is far from accurate. While it can be wet at times it's no worse than Europe or many parts of the US eastern seaboard. It is true that you need to come prepared for all conditions, be it wet or dry, cool or hot. Fortunately the changeable nature of the weather also means that things often improve very quickly!

For the most accurate and up to date information the Meteorological Service of New Zealand (MetService) website is a great resource. The link is <http://www.metservice.com/national/>. MetService provides all of New Zealand's local weather forecasts.



# GOOD ROUTES AND TIMESCALES

Ideally you'll have at least two weeks available to see the best of New Zealand but don't despair if you have less; there's still plenty you can do with just a week or even a few days.

## SOUTH

The South Island has a lower population density than the North Island and is blessed with some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. The roads are empty, well-surfaced and simply made for riding motorcycles!

If you only have a week free you may want to start in Christchurch and explore the highlights of this slice of motorcycling paradise. In 7 days you can see the best the South Island has to offer without feeling too rushed. You'll be able to visit Christchurch, see Mt Cook, cruise breathtaking Milford Sound in the Fiordland, give yourself an adrenaline boost in Queenstown, see two of the world's most prolific glaciers and experience the rugged, desolate beauty of the west coast.

Stretching your time on the South Island to two weeks will give you opportunity to see it all and have plenty of time to relax in a number of the most scenic spots. Queenstown, glacier country, the Marlborough wine region and Abel Tasman National Park are favourite areas to stay a little longer.

In two weeks you could also do a great one way trip from Christchurch through most of the South Island, cross the Cook Strait by ferry and see various spectacular highlights on the North Island before ending your trip in Auckland.

One way riding is popular and provided your bike rental is over 14 days you won't usually be charged a one way fee! Don't forget you can ride the other way around too.



# GOOD ROUTES AND TIMESCALES



## NORTH

Although the North Island is more densely populated it's by no means overcrowded! It has much to offer the discerning tourist including the 'winterless north' with its fabulous Bay of Islands, the incomparable coastal scenery of the Coromandel Peninsula, the hot springs and Maori culture of Rotorua, magnificent Lake Taupo and the Bay of Plenty and not forgetting Hawkes Bay which has some of the world's best preserved art deco buildings in Napier and superb wines!

Three days on the North Island is perfect for a short tour to the Bay of Islands and Cape Reinga at the northernmost tip. Just under a week is needed to cover the best of the rest this interesting region offers.

For examples of typical tours that cover each of the timescales take a look at the [self-guided tour web pages online](#).

They will show you the areas you'll pass through along with the usual length of time it takes for that route.

Prices on the website include the bike, accommodation for one or two in nice 3.5 to 4 star B&B/hotels/motels and a very detailed itinerary and Google maps. You may want to arrange the route and accommodation yourself but these pages will give you a good idea of ideal routes. [Click here to view some route ideas.](#)

# ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS AND RELATED ISSUES

The choice of accommodation in New Zealand is wide as you'd expect of any good tourism centre...

At the lower end of the cost range camping is popular in summer and there are caravan parks where you can pitch a tent in most towns. The country is very well geared up for the outdoors way of life and so camp sites in National Parks are also common although facilities usually consist of toilets with no showers and you need to be fairly self sufficient.

Backpacker hostels are common and a shared dorm is cheap but won't guarantee you a good night's rest! They usually have low cost rooms for singles or couples which are often very basic but will give you some privacy and peace and quiet.

The most popular accommodations for visiting bike riders are B&Bs, motels and hotels. These range from mid price 3-star to very highly priced resort and boutique style hotels. As with all accommodation you get the good, average and bad and so knowing the sensibly priced, good quality places is useful.



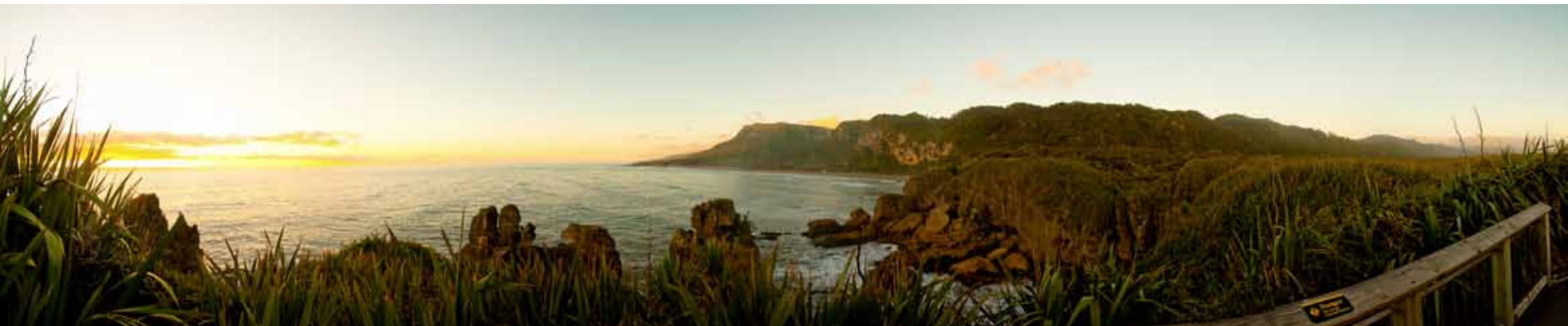
The excellent 'i-SITE' Visitor Centres are all over NZ and they will help you find accommodation in each area. However, you tend to find that by turning up at the end of a day's ride and searching for somewhere to stay often means that the good, medium priced places have all been booked. The expensive and poor quality rooms tend to fill last and so organising accommodation in advance means you'll often get better value.

This is especially important in summer when accommodation in some areas is booked many months in advance. Trying to find accommodation in major tourist centres such as Queenstown in school holiday time for example is challenging to say the least and you can expect to pay a premium.

Booking in advance is **essential at these times** and so while a carefree ride stopping wherever you fancy may be your preferred style of travel it is often not practical at the busier times of year unless you have a very flexible wallet!

If you are part of a group the accommodation issue is a very important one as there are many places where accommodation is limited and if you need several rooms together it can be impossible to find at the time of arrival. Booking in advance is essential in this case.





# BIKE RENTALS EXPLAINED

There's a wide variety of touring motorcycles available in both Auckland and Christchurch. You can choose between the ever popular Harley-Davidsons and BMWs, or if you prefer something Japanese there are various models from the stables of Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha. Whether you prefer to cruise in laid-back style, tour in comfort or ride something a bit 'sportier' you'll have a choice.

You won't find superfast sports bikes in rental fleets as insurance is impossible to obtain and that's not what touring in NZ is about really.

Better to sit back, relax, ride at an easy pace and take in the magnificent surroundings.

Hire rates depend on the season and the rental period. During the peak rental months of December through March demand for bikes (and hence prices) are higher. The bikes have to pay for themselves at this time as it is very quiet in winter.

If you are prepared to travel outside of the peak time it means you can often grab a bargain! In general, the longer you rent, the lower the daily rate and you can see typical daily rates on our Auckland and Christchurch rentals pages which can be found by following [this link](#).

Be aware of some rental company prices that don't include panniers and insurance in the advertised pricing. Some companies offer insurance which only covers third party personal injury and not the bike and other people's property such as cars. Hitting a Mercedes or similar at any time is not good but having to pay for all the damage will make for a really bad day!



There is always an insurance excess with bike rentals and this means you pay the first amount of any claim up to a set amount based on the bike. You can sometimes reduce this excess for an extra fee just like with typical car rentals but you'll generally find excesses tend to remain quite high due to the nature of motorcycling. Costs over the excess are covered by the insurance.

When you collect you'll be asked for a security bond which once again varies depending on the bike. This is taken via credit card and is refunded when the bike is returned undamaged.

If there should be an accident then the bond is used against payment of the insurance excess.



It's important you obtain good travel insurance before your trip. If you have to cancel for some reason there would be a cancellation fee to pay.

The bike has been reserved for you and if you cancel there may not be time to rent it to anyone else and so a fee will apply. Check the terms and conditions for the bike you are renting to confirm this.

Travel insurance should cover you for this as well as any other unfortunate circumstances during the trip.

We are not experts on insurance but know that some clients have used World Nomads for their policies - [www.worldnomads.com](http://www.worldnomads.com).



Make sure you check that it meets your needs as cover varies for people in different countries.

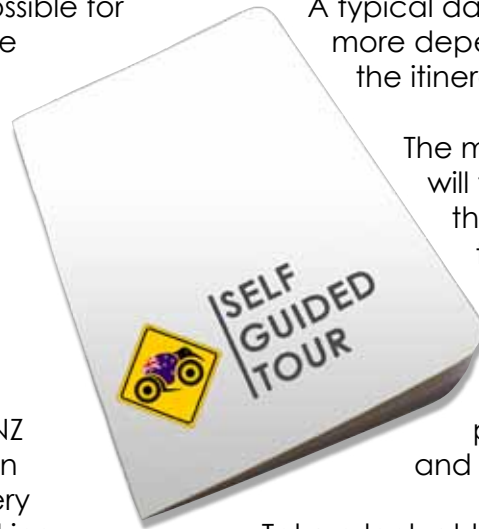
# SELF GUIDED TOURS

Self-guided tours are designed to make it as easy as possible for you to arrange your bike tour in New Zealand. They take away all the trouble and time needed to research and plan your tour.

You can be confident that you'll make the most of your time here, see the best the route has to offer and have somewhere nice to stay each night. It makes for stress free days on the bike and leaves you to simply enjoy the freedom of riding, marvel at the scenery and soak up the atmosphere.

It's not the case with all companies but the BikeRoundNZ self-guided tour costs include the bike, accommodation in nice quality 3.5 to 4 star B&Bs/motels/resorts and a very detailed itinerary with maps that will tell you the best biking route and things to see on the way.

The pace has been designed for people that like to make good use of the bike but also enjoy stopping to admire the spectacular scenery, take short walks to things of interest and enjoy local hospitality with a great coffee or lunch at cafés and restaurants on the way.

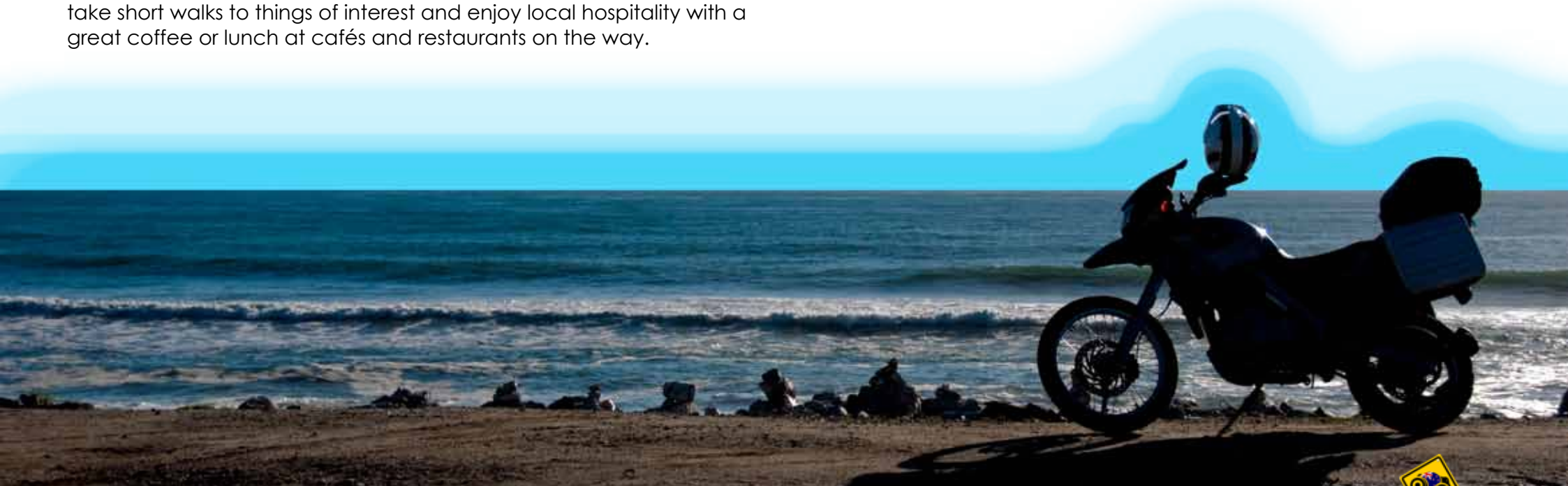


A typical day is 350km but on some days it is less and others a little more depending on what there is to see. The maps provided with the itinerary will take you from one overnight stop to the next.

The maps combined with the detailed itinerary document will take you on the best biking roads, tell you all about the background and history of each area and highlight things to see on the way.

In some cases 'rest' days are built into some of the longer tours in places of particular interest. It's possible to tailor the tour to your dates and preferences and booking your accommodation before and after the trip is no problem if it helps.

Take a look at the **self-guided tour section of the web site** for ideas of tours and pricing.



# GUIDED TOURS

If you like the benefits of the self-guided tour but also prefer the company of other riders and meeting new friends then a guided tour may be a good option.

Everything is organised for you, your luggage carried on a support vehicle and there is always someone on hand to offer advice and help in the event of a problem. You'll be told all about places of interest on the way and you can be sure of a nice place to stay and good food once there.

As you'd expect, guided tours cost more than the self-guided tours but the peace of mind, ease of travel and friendliness of your travelling companions adds to the experience and so it's an increasingly popular form of touring for those that enjoy the company of others.

You can see details of [popular guided tour by clicking here](#).





# SAFETY AND GRAVEL ROADS

There are many gravel roads and remote areas in New Zealand and the increasing popularity of enduro type riding on tarmac and gravel roads means that some people like to visit for this type of trip.

You have to be sure that the bike you are renting is allowed on gravel roads by the rental company. Many bikes promoted for enduro riding by manufacturers are not allowed on gravel roads, such as some of the big BMW GSs for example.

You have to be very well prepared to ride remote areas. Riding alone is not a good idea and you have to ensure you have communications and contingency plans in the event of an accident or breakdown. Tell someone where you are going and your expected time of arrival.

Always check in after the trip to prevent a search. A whole book could be written about this aspect of bike touring and this isn't the place for it but be sure to inform the rental company if you intend to travel off tarmac roads.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Take a look at some of our Frequently Asked Questions for answers to common queries. If the information you need isn't there then please e-mail us at [info@bikeroundnz.com](mailto:info@bikeroundnz.com) and we'd be very happy to help!

## ? Can I collect my bike at the airport?

1 Airport collections/drop offs are not available I'm afraid. If flying long distance you should have a night's rest before collecting the bike and the depots are all fairly close to the city/airport.

## ? Can I leave luggage at the depot during my trip and/or what if I need to ship it to another city?

1 You are welcome to leave your luggage at the depot during your trip and there is no charge. We'd be pleased to arrange shipping to another depot if you are finishing in another city. Charges are at our cost price.

## ? What are the depot opening hours?

1 Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm. Sunday by appointment only.

## ? Can I rent a helmet and riding equipment?

1 Yes. We always recommend that you bring your own riding equipment for fit and comfort purposes but if this isn't possible, good quality helmets, jackets, gloves, trousers and rainsuits are all available to rent. Boots need to fit properly and are the only item of gear we don't provide.

Some of the bikes can be equipped with satnav (GPS) units too. Please ask if you require more details. No guarantees are made for riding gear and it is rented at your own risk.



## ? What is the security bond and insurance excess?

1 The security bond is processed on your credit card and refunded upon safe return of the undamaged bike. If there should be an accident then the bond is used against payment of the insurance excess. The insurance excess is the amount of damage not covered by the insurance company and is the most you would have to pay in the event of an accident. If the damage is only NZ\$300, for example, then that's all you pay but if the damage is NZ\$6,000 and the excess is NZ\$4,000 you would be liable for NZ\$4,000 and the insurance pays the remainder. For rentals of 7 days or longer you can reduce the excess by paying an extra daily amount (the 'collision damage waiver') which reduces the excess by 50% or more, depending on the bike. The collision damage waiver varies between NZ\$20 and NZ\$40 per day for the different bikes. Please ask if you require more details.









## ? What license do I need and what else should I bring when collecting the bike?





1 You will need a full bike licence written in English. If it is not in English you will also need an International Drivers Permit. Your home country license must allow you to ride the size of bike you are renting. Please note that the International Drivers Permit does not replace your home country license and you will need to carry both. You will also need your passport if from overseas and a VISA or MasterCard for the rental payment and security deposit. Don't forget to bring the booking confirmation with the address and telephone number of the depot!

## ? Can I rent a SatNav for my trip?

1 Yes, SatNav units are available for the most popular bike types. Because availability is somewhat limited these need to be booked in advance. You're also welcome to bring your own and the friendly staff at the depot will help you fit it. Please ask for more details.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

-  **Can I rent in one city and drop off in another?**
-  Yes, one way rentals between Auckland and Christchurch or vice versa can be accommodated. Depending on the specific bike and length of rental period there may be a one way fee applicable. Please ask for more details.
-  **Are locks supplied?**
-  Yes. Although bike theft is rare in New Zealand, a lock is supplied and should be used every time you leave the bike.
-  **Will my mobile phone work in New Zealand and will I be able to get a signal?**
-  Check with your phone company to see if they can turn on 'roaming' allowing you to use your phone here. It may be cheaper to buy a SIM card for your phone here (mobile phone shops are everywhere and SIM cards start at NZ\$30). Mobile phones obtain a signal in almost all towns but outside of towns it can be patchy.
-  **What happens if I break down?**
-  The depot will provide you with a National Breakdown recovery number but first you should try and talk to the depot in case it is something simple they can fix over the phone. The best solution to a serious problem depends on where you are and what the problem is. The depot will do everything it can to get you moving again and this is usually within 24 hours. It may involve a repair, replacement bike or alternative transport but the priority is to allow you to continue your trip. Specific terms and conditions apply to Self Guided Tours including accommodation.

-  **Are there toll roads in Christchurch?**
-  No! All the beautiful roads on the South Island are thankfully still toll-free.
-  **Are there toll roads in Auckland?**
-  The Northern Gateway Toll Road is a 7.5km motorway extension just north of Auckland. Heading north the toll road begins just before Orewa and ends after the Johnstone Hills near Puhoi. The NZ Transport Agency recently announced that as of mid-2010 motorcycles will be subject to the same toll as cars using the road, currently set at NZ\$2 per trip. You can avoid the toll road by taking the more scenic State Highway 17 via Orewa.

## Something we missed?

Just e-mail us your questions to [info@bikeroundnz.com](mailto:info@bikeroundnz.com) and we'd be very pleased to help. We love talking about bikes and riding them in New Zealand. We're always happy to give advice over the phone too so just send us a message with your phone number and a convenient time to call and we'll get back to you right away.

We look forward to greeting you with a friendly *Kia ora* soon!



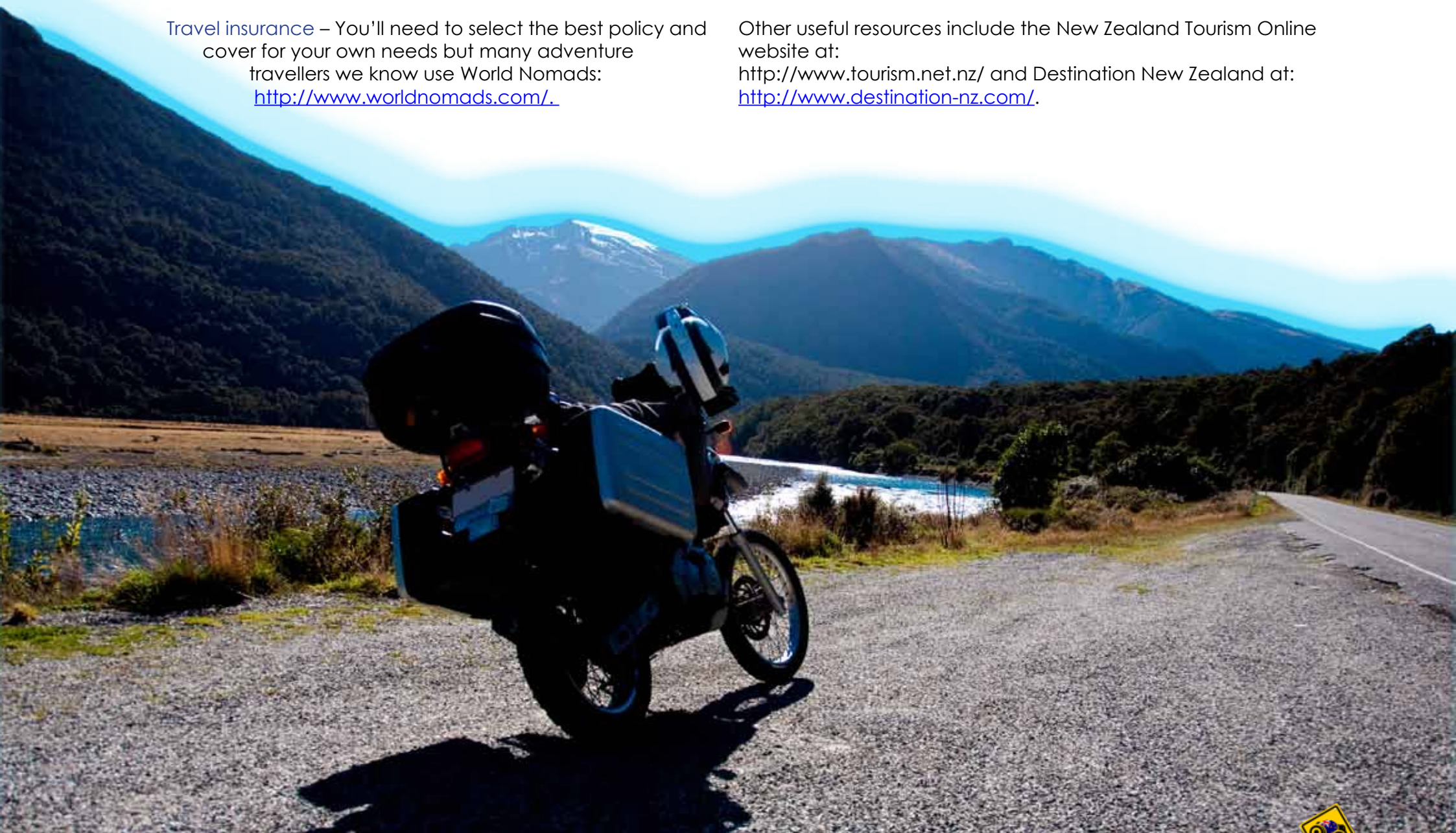
# USEFUL RESOURCES

**Travel guides** – Lonely Planet is one of the most widely-used travel guides in the world and for good reason. Read more at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/new-zealand>.

**Travel insurance** – You'll need to select the best policy and cover for your own needs but many adventure travellers we know use World Nomads: <http://www.worldnomads.com/>.

**Camping** – New Zealand Camping Guide is a useful online resource; read more at: <http://www.nzcamping.co.nz/>.

Other useful resources include the New Zealand Tourism Online website at: <http://www.tourism.net.nz/> and Destination New Zealand at: <http://www.destination-nz.com/>.



# WE'RE HERE TO HELP

We hope you found this guide useful!

We're here to help make it as easy as possible for you to arrange your bike tour in New Zealand so that you make the most of your time whilst here. Just ask as questions or ideas come to mind! We'll always be pleased to help and 99% of the time will come back to you within 24 hours of your enquiry - usually less depending on where you're located in the world.

A simple rental gives you complete freedom to please yourself and arrange your time as you wish. Some people love to travel like this whilst others find that not having a basic plan and knowing where they are staying at the end of each day weighs on their mind and can be stressful.

In this case the self-guided tour take away all the trouble and time needed to research and plan your tour and you can be confident that you'll make the most of your time here, see the best routes and have somewhere nice to stay each night. They make for stress free days on the bike so that you can simply enjoy the freedom of riding, marvel at the scenery and soak up the atmosphere.

Guided tours are just as convenient and you'll have the company of like-minded people on the way as well as your luggage carried for you and additional support and local information as you travel. Whichever option you prefer there's a choice of bikes and routes available and as much help and advice as you need to ensure it's right for you.

We know the timescales that work as you travel around New Zealand and can advise a suitable pace for the type of holiday you'd prefer. Most people like to make good use of the bike but still have time to take in the scenery and soak up the atmosphere but if it's a fast paced tour you'd prefer or a more relaxed holiday then we're happy to help with that too. Detailed itinerary documents with maps are available for almost all areas of the country and these help to ensure you see the best things and ride the most exhilarating roads during your trip.

In summary, you'll be taken great care of from the moment you first enquire to the day you hand back your bike. If some expert advice and help would help you plan your tour of New Zealand then just ask! We love New Zealand, know most areas intimately and hope that our advice helps you to leave with the same passion for the country as we have.

Thanks for your interest and we hope to welcome you to New Zealand sometime soon!

Warmest regards



Mark

Please, just ask if you have any questions: [info@bikeroundnz.com](mailto:info@bikeroundnz.com)

