

Welcome to some of my favourite places in **Aotearoa New Zealand**.

You'll notice there are no wine tours included. This is because there are too many to choose from. Might I suggest Googling 'wine tours New Zealand' and mounting your own voyage of discovery? Every province has its own bottled deliciousness.

Accommodation – if you're wanting more of a 'meet the people' experience, then Airbnb may meet your wish – the listings are still mostly home-stays. However, having said that, last month I completely loved staying on a working high-country hill station! Braemar Station is the next along from Mt Cook Station, which is right beneath our highest peak, Aoraki Mt Cook. Google it, too. It's spectacularly beautiful – I'm seriously thinking of booking myself in, as a contrast from a week in city Sydney.

These long, skinny islands of ours harbour an amazing variety of geologies, ecologies, adventures, challenges, cultures and experiences – I hope you'll make the trip. We're worth it...

One of my favourite places is where I now live: **Murchison!**

<http://www.visitmurchison.nz>

Murchison is known as the 'white-water capital' of the country, because there are rivers everywhere – the Gowan, Mangles, Matiri, Glenroy, Matakītaki, Maruia and the mighty Kawatiri (Buller). For those who are into canoeing, kayaking, or rafting, it's a dream come true. The rivers vary from Class 2 to 4 white-water, so they're not for the faint-hearted.

And for the mountain biking enthusiasts, there's an excellent 85km-long trail called the "Old Ghost Road", which goes all the way from Lyell to the West Coast, reviving a long-forgotten gold miner's road. Originally a gold rush town, Murchison was almost completely destroyed by a huge earthquake in 1929 – you can find out all about it at our district museum.

This little settlement is surrounded by mountains and, sometimes, mist which loops the bush-covered hills like a river ghost. In winter, we have frosts and snow - in summer, the temperature can soar above 35 under a bright, cloudless sky.

Murchison (permanent pop. 490-ish) has cafes, a kayak school, a butcher with the best bacon in the South Island, a swing bridge (just down the road) and there's still gold in them thar rivers...!



Some cool links:

<http://www.bullercanyonjet.co.nz>

<http://www.rivers.co.nz>

<http://www.oldghostroad.org.nz>



Another of my favourite places is where I lived for several years:

Taranaki

<http://www.visit.taranaki.info>

Taranaki is world-famous in New Zealand for its mountain, beaches, art and gardens.

Follow the links in the above site to read up on Taranaki history – and to gain an introduction to the fascinating and oftentimes bloody history of Maori and European settlement of this spectacular region.

Taranaki is home to a flourishing arts scene with diverse and talented artisans and galleries who will challenge and inspire, provoke and move you. One of my favourites is the Govett-Brewster, a publicly-funded, NZ and international contemporary art gallery and NZ's first and only museum of contemporary art. Not to be missed!

The adjoining Len Lye Centre is an international destination for experimental film and kinetic art. It houses the collection and archive of Len Lye, one of the 20th century's most original artists....

Lye's kinetic 48metre high sculpture Wind Wand has pride of place on New Plymouth's award-winning 13km Coastal Walkway, which weaves from port, to city, to parklands and crosses the architectural masterpiece that is the Te Rewa Rewa



bridge. There are many more fantastic walks and hikes around the region that will suit all fitness and accessibility levels, from flat boardwalk strolls to bush walks teeming with bird life.

And I have to mention another delight of mine: the Forgotten World Highway – New Zealand's oldest touring route between Stratford and the mountainous centre of the North Island.

Some cool links:

<http://www.govettbrewster.com>



<http://www.newzealand.com/int/feature/national-parks-egmont/>

<http://www.trc.govt.nz/pukeiti-home/>