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# New Zealand's Hottest Destination Is One You've Likely Never Heard Of

**At the top of the country's South Island, Nelson Tasman dazzles visitors with otherworldly natural beauty and world-class wine, art, and cuisine.**

By  
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Even in a country renowned across the globe for its ineffable natural beauty, New Zealand's Nelson Tasman region particularly astounds. Encompassing the most northwesterly part of the South Island—including the city of Nelson, its oldest settlement—and considered the nation's sunniest place (with 30% more rays than the national average), it's home to a literal slew of earthly wonders, including Lake Rotomairewhenua—officially named “the clearest lake in the world”—and Farewell Spit, one of the largest sand spits on the planet, as well as scads of exquisite beaches, cerulean bays, extraordinary rockscapes, soaring alpine peaks, and towering ancient forests.

But the area's spectacular array of staggering landscapes is just one notable element of its exceptional and varied allure. These days, Nelson Tasman offers a bona fide bonanza of first-rate activities and destinations for nature-lovers, oenophiles, gourmets, and aesthetes alike.

## Gardens of Plenty

It's worth planning your trip well in advance to score a coveted reservation at [Edenhouse](#), Nelson Tasman's most sought-after luxury lodge. Nestled in the seemingly boundless verdure of the Orinoco Valley, a secluded pastoral area studded with farms and orchards and just 45 minutes from Nelson Airport, it's an unrivaled base from which to explore the myriad riches of the region—though no one will blame you for never wanting to leave the idyllic grounds.



The gardens at Edenhouse Luxury Lodge.

#### *EDENHOUSE*

A stay at Edenhouse feels like a sublime reunion with old friends—in this case, owners Peter and Bobbie Martin—who also happen to be front-runners for the title of World’s Most Gifted Hosts. Upon returning to Bobbie’s native New Zealand in 2002 following many years living abroad, they envisioned the then-bare 50-acre property as the perfect canvas on which to create their particular version of paradise. A former interior designer in London and graduate of The English Gardening School, Bobbie designed the now-luxuriant gardens that so rightly justify the lodge’s name, and the Martins opened their doors to guests in 2006.

With just three sumptuously furnished suites—each measuring over 1,200 feet and outfitted with two bathrooms and a sitting room—and sprawling grounds replete with tucked-away spots ideal for a quiet breakfast or a glass of wine, the property feels like an impeccably furnished, impossibly welcoming private home, because, well, that’s exactly what it is.





A Garden Cottage bedroom at Edenhouse.

#### *EDENHOUSE*

Artful abundance defines the Edenhouse experience, from the cut-crystal vases teeming with roses, tulips, and magnolia blossoms that grace virtually every room, to the kitchen table practically groaning beneath bowls piled high with locally grown apples, kiwis, and pears.

Dinners at Edenhouse bring its peerless quality and hospitality to life, commencing with cocktails and elegant canapés served fireside in the beautifully appointed sitting room, where Chilli, the Martins’ irresistible black Labrador, helps shoulder hosting duties with winning aplomb. Guests then move to the candlelit dining room for truly memorable meals that celebrate Nelson’s considerable culinary bounty.



The Edenhouses gardens

#### *EDENHOUSES*

Acclaimed nationwide for its produce—including some of the world’s best apples and berries—and plentiful, startlingly fresh seafood from its twin marine playgrounds of Tasman and Golden bays, the region also boasts a vast array of artisan producers specializing in everything from oils and specialty breads to preserves and spices (including local saffron). Starters like tagliolini with sage butter and local white truffle precede mains such as panfried grouper served with platters of fresh garden vegetables, while desserts including pavlova with passion-fruit curd and local cheeses like sheep’s milk Camembert conclude the nightly epicurean extravaganza.





Breakfast at Edenhouse.

*EDENHOUSE*

## Heaven on Earth

Edenhouse's delectable cuisine pairs flawlessly with the deliciously complex vintages of [Himmelsfeld Vineyard](#), whose wines the lodge serves exclusively. Established in 1991 in the nearby village of Upper Moutere, it's a singular example of Nelson Tasman's top-tier wine producers, which remain relatively unsung on the global stage compared with the industrial-scale winemakers of Marlborough, its world-renowned neighbor to the southeast.

Here, owner Beth Eggers—whose forebears arrived from Germany in 1859 to farm in the area—produces Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Sauvignon on just three acres. The distinct Moutere terroir—abundant sunshine and warm summers,



cool autumn nights, and the region's unforgiving clay soils—helps create Himmelsfeld's world-class wines using traditional vine cultivation methods with minimal intervention.



One of Himmelsfeld Vineyard's resident flock of Romney sheep.

*BETH EGGERS*

Himmelsfeld's inimitable atmosphere rivals its acclaimed wines, owing largely to its resident flock of Romney sheep. Numbering around 100, they're enchanting ambassadors, lolling beside the long driveway under an apple-tree canopy to greet visitors, and moonlighting as natural weed whackers by grazing the grounds of the organic vineyard. Every one of these long-wooled charmers is descended from Grace, Eggers's first ewe, whom she acquired 25 years ago. Having driven some 600 miles to her friend's sheep farm at the southern end of the South Island, she returned home with Grace in the footwell of the passenger seat. At one point during the journey, the lamb jumped up on the steering wheel, startling a policeman who'd just pulled up beside Eggers's car. ("He was in the right-hand turn lane, thank goodness," she recalls. "I took off in a hurry!")

Aptly, considering the winery's name—German for "heaven's field"—Himmelsfeld is also home to a tiny, wood-paneled chapel, flanked by vines on one side and an apple orchard on the other. Built in 2005, it's modeled on the chapel of a farmhouse in the Siedelbach Valley of Germany's Black Forest, a stop on a European cycling trip Eggers took in 1979, during which she vowed to have a small vineyard one day. Whether or not you're an oenophile, there may be no better way to meditate on the pristine splendor of this far-flung corner of the world than to wander among the gentle sheep



and daffodils at Himmelsfeld, gazing out over the verdant Moutere Hills to the sole sound of the surrounding apple blossoms rustling softly in the breeze.



Every one of Himmelsfeld's sheep is descended from Grace, Beth Eggers's first ewe, whom the owner acquired 25 years ago.

*BETH EGGERS*

## **Coastal Splendor**

When it's time to fully embrace the region's extraordinary environmental bounty, Abel Tasman National Park makes an unbeatable starting point. The smallest of New



Zealand's 13 national parks at just over 90 square miles, it's also its most visited, thanks in large part to its golden, bush-fringed beaches, calm turquoise seas, and the easily manageable walking track that hugs its 30 miles of unspoiled coastline.



Abel Tasman National Park, New Zealand

#### *WINE, ART & WILDERNESS*

The park bears the name of the Dutchman who was the first European explorer to lay eyes on New Zealand, sailing into its Wainui Inlet in Golden Bay in 1642 and promptly clashing with the local Maori, whose ancestors had lived along the coast beginning some eight centuries ago. Four members of Tasman's crew were killed in the ensuing conflict, which compelled him to coin the waters "Murderers Bay" and hastily change course for the North Island before ever coming ashore.

Thankfully, skirmishes between visitors and locals have settled down considerably since then; these days, exploring the park by sea offers a unique and peaceful perspective on its astonishing beauty. For an inspiring introduction to its many charms, book a scenic day cruise with [Abel Tasman Charters](#). You'll meander along the coastline aboard a modern catamaran, past the famous Split Apple Rock and other local landmarks, and learn about the park's storied history. Along the way you can kayak its network of coves, snorkel in crystalline bays, and observe fur seals basking in the sun at the Tonga Island Marine Reserve.





Wharariki Beach, New Zealand

### *WINE, ART & WILDERNESS*

At day's end you'll have a true appreciation for New Zealanders' deep love for the place—one that attracted the world's attention in 2016, when 40,000 Kiwis crowdfunded the purchase of Awaroa Inlet, a 17-acre beach on the Abel Tasman coastline, to keep it out of private hands and ensure its incorporation into the park.

## **Aesthetes' Paradise**

Besides its countless other draws, Nelson Tasman has long been a bastion for artists of all kinds, likely owing to its laid-back lifestyle, awe-inspiring landscapes, and the liberal attitudes of its residents. The birthplace of New Zealand's pottery and ceramic arts scene in the 1950s, the region remains home to some of the country's most prominent ceramic artists, as well as a passionate community of creative trailblazers in mediums including jewelry, glass, and painting.

A defining attribute of Nelson's thriving arts scene is the artists' collective willingness to invite visitors into their studios for a gander at their work and a friendly chat about their creative process. Case in point: sculptor Michael MacMillan, whose bold, kinetic pieces take pride of place in several prominent locations in Nelson and in numerous private and public collections. He and his wife, Jackie, welcome passersby into his lovely, light-filled studio-cum-gallery in the Upper Moutere countryside, where those seeking a more portable example of his vision can shop his gorgeous range of bowls, cheeseboards, platters, and other homeware, all meticulously crafted from aged French oak barriques.





"Underling," designed by Gillian Saunders, with a Cord 812 Westchester sedan from 1937 at World of WearableArt Museum, in Nelson.

*TIM CUFF*

No art aficionado's visit would be complete without a stop at Nelson's [World of WearableArt & Classic Cars Museum](#) (or WOW Museum, as the locals call it), which showcases the most mind-bogglingly spectacular creations from Wellington's annual World of WearableArt Competition, a thoroughly unique, worldwide creative endeavor whose astonishing entries must be seen to be believed.

If you're looking for an expert to help you navigate Nelson Tasman's vast array of attractions, [Wine, Art & Wilderness](#), the region's leading on-the-ground tour operator, offers a carefully curated collection of private, custom-tailored tours providing unparalleled access to its national parks and leading wineries, food producers, and artists in this fascinating corner of a beguiling country the Maori call Aotearoa, or "land of the long white cloud."